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[NOBLE SAVAGE.]

SNOWFLAKES' SHADOW, SUNBEAMS' SHINE.

A CHRISTMAS STORY OF TWO WORLDS.

CHAPTER VII.

She only said my life is dreary,
He cometh not, she said.

She wept I am weary, weary;
I would that I were dead.

TEYNTON.

The workroom of Madame Desmoulins wore a very animated appearance on the day preceding Christmas.

It was a busy time, and madame had much difficulty in securing sufficient hands, and still more to get enough work out of them. Human eyelids will grow heavy, human fingers will wax weary, even when employed on the rarest fabrics and the richest tissues, and it needed the continued stimulus of madam's sharp tongue to keep the dozen girls who had been two nights without sleep steadily stitching away at silk and satin and stuffs of price.

It was not often that Christmas made such demands upon the fashionable modiste, but a succession of peculiarly brilliant reunions was decided upon, and Madame Desmoulins's services could not be dispensed with.

Several of the pale-faced girls were not without attractions, but the countenance of one was characterised by beauty of a very rare class: a purely English face, with features rather full than clear cut, yet bearing that tender loveliness which meets you in the canvases of some of the old painters, and which holds a truer fascination than mere classic regularity.

The latter may be cold as the marble mask of the Medician Venus; the former holds the light of love, the tokens of a true womanly heart in every purely placid lineament.

A transparent pallor overpale the girl's cheek and brow, showing how brilliant might have been her complexion if toil had not marred it—perchance sorrow banished it for ever. For the brown eyes, heavy for want of sleep, looked as though charged with unshed tears, and the little rosebud mouth had lines around it that no happy girl's face of twenty summers should show.

As the afternoon wore on the work drew to a close, and while some fleeting gleams of wintry sunlight still lighted the west-end street in which Madame Desmoulins's establishment was situated the tired girls were at last dismissed, to part for their Christmas holidays.

They separated at the door with many congratulations and good wishes, hearty and true, though sounding somewhat sadly in more than one instance.

It was with a very quivering voice that Rose Dacre wished her companions a Merry Christmas; it was with a faltering step and a downcast glance she took her homeward way.

She knew that no kindly greeting awaited her at home, no beloved faces would be there around the family hearth.

In that small, cold, scantily furnished bed-chamber the only sign of the season was the poor pennyworth of holly from the greengrocer's, which she had hung up over the dingy print above the mantelshelf.

But Rose was not in haste to go home. Despite her tottering walk, caused by the fatigue she had undergone, the girl kept steadily on till she

reached a street of fashionable resort, which was now crowded by sight-seers and intending purchasers.

She stopped before the handsome shop of a picture-dealer.

The broad plate-glass window was filled with treasures: oil-colour landscapes of quiet English scenes, broad sweeps of corn-land and snug granges—"homes of ancient peace"—choice morceaux of well-known artists, engravings of most exquisite delicacy—all that pictorial art can produce for the gratification of wealth.

The girl looked on timidly.

"It isn't there now!" she whispered. "Oh, it cannot be gone!"

She drew a little green-silk net purse from her pocket and counted the contents.

"Five shillings for the rent and I can live on five shillings for a week. Yes, I have just enough—six guineas!"

She entered the shop. Some customers were standing at the back of the place, talking to one of the assistants.

Another shopman advanced towards the girl, with a slightly supercilious look at her poor apparel.

"I have called about the small picture," she said, in a soft, clear voice and shrinking manner—"the little view near Oxford, which was to be six guineas. I had not sufficient money then, you remember."

"H'm! You are just too late. It is sold!"

"The girl clasped her hands with a sharp gesture of disappointment.

"Oh, I am so sorry! I thought you would keep it for me—you said you would."

"Yes, but we don't do that, you know, and—"

and I thought you would not call perhaps if I did."

The shopman glanced again involuntarily at the plain stuff dress and common jacket which the girl wore.

She saw the look and flushed crimson.

"I should have done as I promised," she said, with some dignity. "I would have given a much higher sum than that ere I would have lost the picture."

Something in her earnestness impressed the assistant.

"We have other views in the same locality," he said.

"But not by the same hand?"

"No."

"Then they are useless."

And she turned to go.

As she did so a young lady advanced to the window, holding a small water-colour drawing, evidently with the intention of seeing it in a clearer light.

Another attendant obsequiously drew an easel forward for its reception.

The lady placed the drawing thereon and retired a pace or two to obtain a better view.

As she did so Rose turned her head. Her glance fell on the drawing and an explanation of mingled surprise and regret escaped her.

"Oh, that is it!"

The young lady glanced curiously at the pale girl.

"Are you the artist who executed this?" she asked, in a pleasant voice.

Something in the tone went to Rose's heart. She turned her brown eyes on the deep blue orbs of her questioner with a look of appeal. She felt she could trust the instinct which said—"Whatever the difference of your station, to this woman you can speak without fear."

"No, madame," replied Rose. "I am not an artist. I am but a poor seamstress. I am alone and friendless in this great, cruel world of London. Some weeks past I saw that little picture which you have bought in the window. My heart sprang into a new life! I knew every tree, every little hillock, every bend of the river there shown, for they were the resort of happy girlhood's days. Nor was that all. There was another reason—one not to be spoken here"—and she looked round at the shopman—"which rendered that picture dear to me as my life. Ah! that indeed is worth but little! I asked the price—it was a high one for my slender means, but I resolved I would possess the picture at any cost. I lived on the merest pittance—I cared naught for what I wore—even my petted bird surrendered his morsel of sugar that another penny should be added to the slowly increasing store. I said to myself each hour, 'That picture shall be my Christmas present—the only one I shall ever have in life.' I had imagined that in my little room on the quiet Sundays and in the lonely evenings I should gladden my eyes with this"—and the girl gazed at the little sketch with a hungry yearning. "And, madame," she concluded, turning to the young lady with a faint smile, "when I found my picture was lost my disappointment was very bitter."

"Poor child!" said the lady, pityingly.

She was the junior of Rose by perhaps two years, but the assured position which wealth and station lent rendered the almost maternal tone in which she spoke not only admissible but natural.

Rose's heart warmed to her at the kindly words.

"Pardon me, madame," she said, "that I have spoken thus unguardedly. I thank you for your patient hearing of what should not perhaps have been spoken."

With a curious little old-world courtesy the girl turned to leave the shop.

"Stay!" exclaimed the young lady. "I hope I may justify your good opinion of me. The picture took my fancy, but I have no such claim upon it as you have. It is yours!"

Rose turned to the speaker with tear-swimming eyes.

"Oh, thank you! thank you! It is like giving me a new life! How can I show you the gratitude of my heart?"

"By going home at once, hanging up the picture, and purveying yourself a little feast in honour of its acquisition."

Rose bowed, and, turning to the astonished shopman, drew out her purse and proffered the price of the drawing.

The young lady placed her small, exquisitely gloved hand on the girl's wrist.

"No," she said. "I will not have you do this. Consider this as the Christmas present of a sister. I insist upon it. You will not be so cruel as to refuse me an opportunity of securing my happy Christmas memory also," she added, winningly. "the remembrance that I have done a kindly action to one in whom I feel strangely interested."

Rose could not resist the tone. Her heart was too full for words, and she bowed her head in acquiescence.

"But I mean to have a replica—a copy of the little drawing—or at least one from the same hand," said the lady, gaily, and, turning to the assistant, she asked for the artist's address.

Rose shook her head sadly. She also had made the same inquiry, but fruitlessly.

"I am happy to be able to give it you," responded the shopman. "That young lady also wished to have the address, but the artist neither left one nor called again until yesterday, when, strangely enough, he came with this."

The assistant handed to the young lady a small card bearing the name Charles Oxford and an address in an obscure street written thereon.

Rose watched the transfer with eyes which changed from a look of doubt to one of hope—from hope to a happy certainty—as swiftly as the April sky varies in its moods of sunshine and shower.

The lady turned and marked the wistful gaze which Rose threw on the pasteboard she held in her hand.

She stepped forward, took the dressmaker's hand and drew her aside.

"You are interested in this artist?" she asked, softly.

"If he is the man who painted that picture—then—he was all the world to me."

A simple phrase, but it told a heart-history.

"You have not seen him of late?"

"He is lost to me!"

A depth of passionate pathos thrilled through the reply.

The soft, pitying look was bent on Rose's face with an expression of sisterly affection.

"Let me take you home with me in the carriage. You have seen trouble. Confide in me. Oh, if I could make a sad heart happy—and my own has its bitter burden—I should count this day as my pearl amongst the years! On this even but one short twelvemonth since my heart was sorely stricken. Heaven in its mercy tempered the blow to me. Perhaps to you also happier days are about to dawn. Let me aid in bringing them. Tell me your trouble as to a sister."

The small white hand, ungloved now, sought the thin fingers of the toiler with a tender clasp—the sweet blue eye looked pleadingly into the girl's tear-suffused brown orbs.

Rose's heart went out to this woman with a strange power.

"Let it be as you will," she responded, in a broken voice. "You are very kind."

"Well, that is settled," the young lady said, in a sprightly tone. "Put the picture in the carriage," she continued, addressing the shopman, "and send the engraving after Millais to Mrs. Ducie's this afternoon."

The name struck Rose with a strange surprise.

As they turned to leave the shop she cried, involuntarily:

"You are Dora Ducie!"

The lady started and bent a look of astonishment on her companion, but said nothing.

As the brougham rolled away, however, she asked:

"You know me! I am more than ever interested in you!"

Then Rose with a few sad smiles and many tears told her story.

She had bestowed her affections upon one worthy of her love. Young, rich, handsome, he had won her heart, and her father, a prosperous tradesman, had not discouraged the suit.

All went happily until one day—one black, miserable day—her lover sought her to take an eternal farewell. He had discovered that his father was a disgraced and dishonoured man—a criminal!—a fugitive from the law!

Despite her entreaties, he broke from her arms, saying, in a passion of despairing love, that he would not drag her with him into the abyss of infamy.

When her parent learned the truth he commanded her never to think of him again whom she loved.

Crushed by the blow, Rose had in a short space other griefs to endure. Her father died, his affairs were found to be embarrassed, and the unhappy girl was driven from the scene of her joyous girlhood to face the stern world alone.

She had fled to that refuge of the wretched—the great City, where none knew her, where she need not fear the taunts of the cruel, the sneers of the selfish.

She had lived as live the poor, whose toil-worn fingers win the hard fare, tear-wet, which forms their daily bread.

She saw the picture which her lover had sketched and had once shown to her in the old happy days. It was recognised at once, and the poor girl's thoughts centred in the desire to possess it as a memorial of the lost love.

Rose concluded in a passion of tears as her companion drew the little head to her bosom.

"You will meet again, dear Rose," she whispered.

A space of silence ensued, broken only by Rose's sobs.

"Rose," asked Dora, as the girl grew more composed, "how did you know my name?"

"My lover was known to men once as Ronald Mowbray—his father was your mother's brother-in-law."

With a little cry Dora drew the girl's face to hers and pressed a shower of kisses on cheek and lips and brow.

"Heaven is very good to me. Oh, Rose, we will seek him now!"

Pulling the check-string, she gave orders to the coachman to drive to the address given to her by the picture-dealer's shopman on the artist's card.

CHAPTER VIII.

As monumental bronze unchanged his look,
A soul that pity touched but never shook.

Trained from his tree-rocked cradle to his

her
The fierce extremes of good and ill to brook,
Impassive, fearing but the shame of fear,
A Stoic of the woods, a man without a tear.

CAMPBELL.

HORACE MOWBRAY realised instantly his perilous situation. Yet, envied as he was by hundreds of naked forms, whose yells of savage triumph and vengeance sounded in his ears as the knell of approaching doom, the Englishman was true to his race and faced his foes with defiant courage.

By some instinct of regret, some latent feeling of old friendship, warmed into new life by the words he had but now heard, Mowbray involuntarily bestrode the body of Major Ducie, as though to protect it from insult.

His firelock was empty, but, grasping it by the muzzle with both hands, the Englishman dealt tremendous blows right and left, felling many of his foes and keeping a small circle clear around him.

One brawny Maori, armed with a keen tomahawk, evading a downright blow of the clubbed musket, sprang in with the leap of a panther and inflicted a ghastly wound on Mowbray's shoulder.

Thrown off his guard by pain, the soldier intermitted his exertions momentarily, and in the next instant three stalwart barbarians had

gasped the gunstock and wrenched the weapon from Mowbray's hands.

But the wounded man was not yet conquered. As he struggled to retain the piece the glitter of steel at his feet caught his eye, and by a quick movement Horace Mowbray stooped and possessed himself of Major Ducie's sword.

Resolved to sell his life dearly, the Englishman wielded his new weapon with terrible energy and great address. Four foes soon bit the dust as trophies of Mowbray's prowess.

Hitherto the Maories, whose firelocks had been unloaded when they encountered the Englishman, had refrained from their use, deeming it easy to slay or capture a single foe, but now two of the tattooed warriors most distant from the devoted Pakeha proceeded to charge their pieces.

Two shining barrels were quickly levelled—one at the head, one at the heart of the white man.

But as his foes pulled trigger Mowbray's foot slipped on the short grass, wet with the blood of Major Ducie, and he fell as the bullets wizzed over his head harmlessly.

The nearest Maories, however, took instant advantage of his fall.

Half a score precipitated themselves on Mowbray, and, despite his determined resistance, the wounded man was speedily overpowered, secured and dragged off by the party, who took to rapid flight, as dropping shots and English hurrahs rang in their ears.

As they sped on dark bodies of men of various numbers joined them at different points. It was evident that the Maories were in full retreat, leaving the pah in the hands of the enemy.

As Mowbray turned his eyes backward he presently became satisfied of this fact. A burst of huzzas rang out from the strong stockade, and by the lustre of whirring rockets discharged at the retreating savages, and blue lights burnt as a signal of victory, the captive could discern the ensign of England towering triumphantly in the centre of the fortress.

The wounded man's heart swelled proudly. His countrymen were victorious.

A faint cheer burst from his throat to echo that of his compatriots.

A heavy hand struck him violently on the mouth, causing blood to flow freely, and a harsh voice broke out into a torrent of savage abuse.

"Go to Rewera!" (the fiend!) it cried, in mingled English and Maori. "Keep your breath for the groans you have to utter when we torture you. The Kawana" (governor) "may have won my pah, but it shall never belong to Kuini Wikitoria" (the Queen). "I will return and cut down that flag-pole—I will slay the Pakehas—I will take their skulls to boil the flesh of my foes therein! Ngarauunga has spoken and will keep his word!"

Despite his hardihood, Horace Mowbray shuddered at the words. He had then fallen into the hands of the most dreaded chief amongst the insurgent natives—a man stained with the blood of hundreds of innocent victims—to whom neither age nor sex was sacred—and who still kept up the cannibal customs then fast dying out.

The captive made no reply—it was useless to bandy words with the truculent old savage. Naught remained to Mowbray, bound as he was and weak from loss of blood, save to relinquish fruitless hope of escape and resign himself to meet a protracted and agonising death with what fortitude he could summon.

Yet he shrank from the doom. Not from fear—he was no coward. A few hours before he would have said that the sooner death came to him the more welcome it would be. But the words he had listened to as Major Ducie's life ebbed away had awakened a strong clinging to existence.

What if he had been mistaken and had wronged the woman who had the first claim upon his protecting love—his cherished care! What too if there still remained a haven of hope for him after the broken, despairing years of his later life! What if he should find in his

own far-off country a son to yield him love and honour!

Mowbray strove to banish such thoughts as a vision too fair for earthly realisation. But again and again they recurred, and with them the bitter certainty of his present captivity—his rapidly approaching and terrible death!

By this time his captors, now swelled into a numerous band, had reached the edge of a forest. Glancing round, the prisoner could discern no trace of pursuit. The English, content with their victory and possession of the pah, had not thought it prudent to follow the retreating enemy till morning light.

The band plunged into the dark shadows of the totara and rimu trees and made their way with difficulty through the thick tapestry of climbing plants which hung in dense festoons from stem to stem.

At last they emerged into open ground, thickly covered with the long, flag-like leaves, of leathern toughness, of the hera-keki, or New Zealand flax.

Weakness and fatigue notwithstanding, Mowbray looked round at the savages who encircled him with a soldier's admiration.

It was the first time he had seen the Maori in his warlike attire. Tall, broad-chested, with finely formed limbs, and faces which might have been termed handsome had it not been for the disfiguring tattoo lines, the New Zealand yields nothing to the European race in manliness of appearance.

It was apparent to the soldier that he was the only captive, although some of the farthest groups of natives carried heavy burdens of their dead and wounded, whom the Maori rarely leaves on the battlefield.

A halt was called by the deep, arid crater of an extinct volcano, and in one of the spur-like ravines radiating therefrom the dead bodies were deposited in rude sepulture.

Then the march was resumed, and as the glorious summer sun of the Christmas Day of the Antipodes rose on the wide plains and lit with rosy radiance the distant mountain peaks the savages reached their destination.

It was a native village with a strong pah adjacent.

The former consisted of a range of miserable warrees, or huts, situated on the bank of a considerable river not far from the sea, as was indicated by the ill-smelling masses of sharks' flesh which lay drying in the sun between the canoes ranged on the strand.

A number of frightfully repulsive-looking old women were employed in the preparation of a Maori meal, the principal of the repast being decomposed maize, pork, and kumera, or sweet potatoes. Yet the ovens of heated stones which held now the flesh of swine had often contained the odious meat of the cannibal—the flesh of his fellow man!

The old women and some attractive-looking girls, whose dusky skins took nothing from their beauty, met the returning warriors with a cry of gratulation, soon to be turned into a wailing howl as they learned of defeat and loss.

Fierce were the yells with which they greeted the prisoner as two brawny savages divested him of his upper garments and bound him with his back to one of the gigantic kauri pines which grew around.

Then they proceeded with rough surgery to apply some masticated leaves of medicinal virtues to a deep wound on his shoulder—not from motives of compassion but that life should be preserved for their diabolical orgies.

After which he was left to his own reflections while they partook of their rude repast.

The torture had begun for Horace Mowbray.

It was not solely the pain of his wounds, the cruel cutting of the light bands, the terrible thirst which parched his throat, the scorching sun that poured his beams as if in mockery on his undefended head—it was not even the impending horrors of a hideous death which in that hour brought bitterness to Horace Mowbray's soul!

No! A vision of happy English homes at that joyous season rose before his swollen and

fevered eyes—the Christmas festivities of his boyhood—the first happy Yuletide beneath his own roof tree, when Charlotte Mowbray sat by his side and lent an indescribable charm to the old, treasured customs of the season.

He could picture her now—somewhat maturing perhaps, still the woman of his early love.

In a strange haze of unshed tears he seemed to see a floating mirage-sea of faces known in far-off years—some still on earth, some long since doomed to the dust of the graves.

Charlotte Ducie, the unknown son, Dora, the daughter of his wife—he knew it must be them—came near, they bent reproachful glances on him, they menaced him with frowning looks, they gazed upon him pityingly in a hundred changing moods, till at last all merged into a midnight mist and Horace Mowbray became mercifully unconscious of all around.

A sensation of blessed coolness came to his heated brow and awoke him to life once more. He opened his languid eyes. A native girl was standing before him and pressing some moistened leaves to his forehead.

Her pretty face wore a look of pity, and a modest blush shone through the dusky shadow of her cheeks like a roseate sunrise through grey morning clouds.

Poor child! a tender woman's heart beat under that dark bosom, and even the hated Pakeha shared its sympathy.

Mowbray spoke some faint words of thanks.

The girl smiled, shook her head, replying in the soft Maori tongue, replete with vowels and liquid as is the language of Italy.

Then with a timid gesture she proffered some cooling fruit to the captive's lips.

He accepted it gratefully.

Suddenly, with the leap of a startled fawn, the girl sprang away and hid herself in an adjoining thicket.

The next instant a far less pleasant apparition presented itself to Mowbray's gaze.

A Maori of stature exceeding six feet and proportions well nigh colossal stood before him.

The square, massive countenance surmounted by crisply curling hair of an iron grey was stern and sinister and rendered hideous to excess by the close, curved lines of an elaborate Moku, as the natives term the tatoo marks.

Fierce and prominent eyes of darkest brown and long yellow teeth almost protruding from his skinny lips lent to the physiognomy of the chieftain an added ferocity.

It was the tiger of the Maories, the aged Ngarauunga!

In his right hand he held a heavy stone axe—the sacrificial meri-poomamoo.

"Is the Pakeha ready for death?" he asked, in a species of broken English. "It is not far from him. Does he know me? I am Ngarauunga. I have shed more Pakeha blood than any Ariki of my land. And I will yet cause it to flow in rivers. Let the white man go back to his own country. We want him not. What has he done save grasp our plains and forests in his greedy hands—save waste our race to plant his own in its place?"

The captive looked steadily and sternly at his interrogator, but made no reply.

"What do they tell us, the preaching men you send?" continued the chief, in his taunting tone. "The Pihopa" (bishop) "speaks good words—tells us not to lie—not to steal—not to kill. Ah! but what of the other Pakehas? They do all these things—they are as dirt!"

And he made a gesture of disdain.

"There is utu" (a blood-feud) "between Ngarauunga and the Pakehas never to be healed. I have a thirst for their lives never to be sated."

Several of the natives had arisen from their repast and strolled up leisurely to the scene.

As they listened to the old man's harangue however their faces grew animated, and as their numbers increased a circle was formed round the chief and his captive, and a measured dance commenced—the war-dance of the New Zealand aborigines.

They circled round Mowbray in a mad rush to a chant like the howl of starving wolves in

Siberian snows—they menaced him with hideous grimaces, mocked at him with protruded tongues and fierce hisses, simulated his coming tortures by shudder of body and quiver of limb; then at last with one terrific roar, one wild leap into the air, the whole circle rested immobile as so many statues of bronze.

Again the old chief advanced.

"Will the Pakeha weep when he feels the fire?" he yelled, whirling the stone axe round in a circle close to Mowbray's steady, unflinching eyes. "Would he like to go home to the wyenes (wife)?" "Ah, ha! she shall never see him more!"

The hatchet in its rapid circles passed Mowbray's head so closely as to brush the hair.

One of the savage warriors addressed some words of caution to the old chief. They feared an incautious stroke might deprive them of their expected pleasure.

But Ngarauanga's taste for blood was aroused, and he seemed little inclined to wait for the elaborate tortures to which the prisoner had been doomed.

A sudden thought flashed through Horace Mowbray's mind.

Would it not be well to taunt the old savage into an outburst which should bring swift in place of lingering pain?

It would.

"Go, old man," he said, with a disdainful expression. "Such as you cannot frighten an Englishman. Go home. Dig the land for the sweet potatoes, prepare the flax leaves for the wyenes and the girls. You cannot slay the Pakeha—your old heart has lost its courage—your old hand is as that of a little child!"

Neither the bronze skin nor the deep incisions of the moku could hide the deadly pallor of mortal passion that overspread the old man's face as, springing forward, he aimed the massy, merl-poonamoo full at Mowbray's defenceless head.

"Die then!" he shouted. "Die!"

But ere it descended his right arm was grasped in a grip of iron and the axe torn from his hand and cast far above the heads of the surrounding crowd.

Then, as Ngarauanga turned madly on the assailant, the latter stepped back a pace, crossed his arms over his broad chest and stood proudly erect.

It was a man so young that his visage was yet unmarred by the moku—tall, finely formed as the Belvedere Apollo, with an oval face, clear olive skin and black hair clustering freely over an open brow.

The scarlet blanket fell from his shoulder in classic folds as he stood calmly before the old chief, whose face looked demoniac in his disappointed wrath.

"Te Kao Kao, was it for this I spared your life and adopted you?" shouted Ngarauanga. "Stand from before the Pakeha!"

And, drawing a knife from his belt, the chief sprang forward.

Te Kao Kao was again too quick for the chief. He grasped the old man, and, despite his gigantic frame, threw him heavily to the earth.

A hundred dark forms rushed forward.

They seized the young man, hurled him down, and speedily bound him hand and foot with the tenacious leaves of the flax plant.

Ngarauanga was assisted to his feet, and a chorus of shouts broke forth.

"Not now—kill them not now! Let them both die before the whole tribe!"

A shrill cry rang out—a slight, agile form sprang through the crowd, and the pretty Maori maiden who had succoured Mowbray rushed into the midst of the group and threw herself on the young man's neck.

"Percy!" she said, in the soft Maori. "Percy, I will not leave thee!—they shall not slay thee!"

But the next moment old Ngarauanga had torn his daughter from the youth, and with brutal blows Horace Mowbray and his would-be preserver were hurried up the slope and hurled into the strong pah!

(To be Continued.)

SWALLOWS.

We were going to say that everybody is acquainted with the swallow, perfectly distinct in plumage and habits. There is the sand martin, who excavates his nest in a sand bank; the twittering blue-bodied swallow who builds in our chimney; the house-martin, who nestles in the upper angle of a window, or under the jutting roof; and the long-winged, active swifts, known by their dark plumage, and their circling in calm evenings at a great height. They all live upon insects.

The chimney-swallow is a perfect pattern of maternal affection; from morning till night, during the whole summer, she is continually skimming close to the ground, hunting for flies for her young brood. Bewick gives an amusing account of a swallow that had become quite attached to the children by whom he was reared. They used to go out in the field together, the bird being permitted to fly wherever he wished; but he kept always circling above them wherever they went. When one of the children caught a fly he called the swallow with a whistle, when it immediately descended and perched on the hand of the child, who had the fly prepared for him.

WOMEN AND WINE.

POP! went the gay cork flying,
Sparkled the grey champagne,
By the light of day that was dying,
He filled up the goblets again.
Let the last, best toast be woman,
"Woman, dear woman," said he,
"Empty your glass, my darling,
When you drink to your sex with me."

But she caught at his strong fingers
And held them tight as in fear,
And through the gathering twilight
Her fond voice fell on his ear:
"Nay, ere you drink, I implore you,
By all that you hold divine,
Pledge a woman in tear-drops,
Rather by far than in wine."

By the woes of the drunkard's mother,
By the children that beg for bread,
By the face of her whose beloved one
Looks on the wine when 'tis red.
By the kisses changed to curses,
By the tears more bitter than brine,
By many a fond heart broken,
Pledge no woman in wine.

What has wine brought to woman?
Nothing but tears and pain;
It has torn from her heart her lover,
And proven her payers in vain;
And her household goods all scattered,
Lie tangled up in the vine.
Oh, I prithe, pledge no woman
In the curse of so many—wine.

A. H. M.

SCIENCE.

COLOURING ZINC ROOFS.—Among recent German inventions is a simple process, depending on the use of acetate of lead, by which every kind of colour is applicable to sheets of zinc. By mixing black lead, for instance, with the salt, a very agreeable light brown hue is obtained. It is by this process that the cupola of the synagogue at Nuremberg has been painted. A sufficient length of time has already elapsed, it is said, to show that the atmosphere has had no influence on the zinc sheeting of the roof, thus showing the practical value of the process in such cases. By the addition of other colouring matters, light or dark shades of yellow or grey may be produced.

SIZING FOR SIGN WORK.—One of the best mordants or sizing for sign work is made by exposing boiled linseed oil to a strong heat in a

pan; when it begins to smoke, set fire to the oil, allow it to burn a moment, and then suddenly extinguish it by covering the pan. When cold it will be ready for use, but will require thinning with a little turpentine.

TO FIND THE CONTENTS OF BOILERS.—To find the contents of cylinder boilers multiply the area of the head in inches by the length in inches and divide the product by 1728; the quotient will be the number of cubic feet of water the boiler will contain. Example: Diameter of head, 36 inches; area of head 1017.87 inches; length of boiler, 20 feet or 240 inches. Now multiply 1017.87 by 240 and the product will be 244,289.6, divide this by 1728 and the result will be 141.37 cubic feet, which will be the contents of the shell.

EFFECT OF GREEN VITRIOL AND CARBOLIC ACID UPON THE GROWTH OF PLANTS.—Both sulphate of iron and carbolic acid are employed to disinfect fecal matter, which is afterwards employed as fertilizer. Nessler has therefore been experimenting upon the effects of these disinfectants upon the germination of seeds and the growth of plants. If the soil was kept quite dry the plants died when 25 parts of sulphate of iron or 10 parts of carbolic acid were added to 170,000 parts of earth. If the soil was moist the plants would stand 200 parts of sulphate of iron and 50 parts of carbolic acid to 170,000 of earth, without injury. When the manure is evenly distributed, as it should be for other reasons too, these disinfectants are uninjurious to husbandry.

HOW TO APPLY MANURE.—When planting trees, shrubs, and vines no manure should be placed in contact with the roots, but put it above them when the holes are nearly filled, so that it will be covered several inches. Cow manure is best, well-rotted stable manure is almost equal, but as winter approaches, coarse manure, mixed with considerable straw, spread over the ground rather thick around the stems or trunks, as far as the roots extend, will be useful in preventing injury from severe frost, also enriching the ground, and benefiting the trees.

INVISIBLE INK FOR POSTAL CARDS.—The "Deutsche Illustrirte Gewerbezeitung" proposes the use of what may be called "postal card ink," for messages which are sent on such cards or otherwise unsealed. A solution of nitrate or chloride of cobalt, or chloride of copper, mixed with a little gum or sugar, produces a "magic ink," which is made visible by warming, either by holding against the stove or over a burning match. Potassium ferrocyanide in solution may also be used; but this requires a developer, for which either copper or iron sulphate may be employed. With the former the writing will appear in brown, and with the latter in blue colour.

PROPER SPEED OF CIRCULAR SAWS.—Nine thousand feet per minute, for the rim of a circular saw to travel, may be laid down as a rule. For example: A saw 12 inches in diameter, 3 feet around the rim, 3,000 revolutions; 24 inches in diameter, or 6 feet around the rim, 1,500 revolutions; 3 feet in diameter, or 9 feet around the rim, 1,000 revolutions; 4 feet in diameter, or 12 feet around the rim, 750 revolutions; 5 feet in diameter, or 15 feet around the rim, 600 revolutions. The rim of the saw will run a little faster than this reckoning, on account of the circumference being more than three times as large as the diameter. Shingle and some other saws, either riveted to a cast iron collar or very thick at the centre and thin at the rim, may be run with safety at a greater speed.

DURABLE PAINT FOR OUTDOOR WORK.—Grind powdered charcoal in linseed oil with sufficient litharge as a dryer. Thin for use with boiled linseed oil.

A WRITER has compared worldly friendship to our shadow; and a better comparison was never made, for while we walk in sunshine it sticks close to us, but the moment we enter the shade it deserts us.



[WELCOME GUESTS.]

A WOMAN SPURNED.

CHAPTER XVI.

And still and pale and silently
The hapless lady waits her doom.

On their way to the ball Brenton remarked to his wife:

"You are a sensible woman, my dear, and I am glad to find that you are not troubled with many scruples. Interest is our watchword, and to it we only offer such sacrifices as are necessary to complete success in our undertakings. Manvers has been my friend from boyhood, but I gave him up to win you. Mrs. Tardy is your nearest relative, and you surrender her to me that our mutual interests may be severed by getting rid of her. It is a fair compact, and one from which neither of us would retract if we could."

His wife bowed assentingly, and after a brief pause, asked:

"Will this visit to Selwood be actually necessary? Since—since you told me of—the drugged wine I hate to go there. Must I go to keep up appearances? Or can I feign illness, while you go for a few hours?"

After a pause Brenton replied:

"I think you had better accompany me, Emma. You are always mistress of yourself, and you can dissipate such faint suspicion as may have arisen in Mrs. Tardy's mind. She may have shrewdness enough to obtain a glimpse of the truth, but you, with your tact, can soon set her doubts at rest. Yes, dear, I think your presence at Selwood necessary for a brief season."

"Then I must go, I suppose," she said, with a sigh, "but I had rather face the shrewdest detective than that sick old woman."

"On Monday we will run down. I must leave you at Selwood and go back to my business, for owing to what you know is to be done, it has

assumed a rather complicated aspect. Not many men could carry through with success such a transaction as I have planned, but I flatter myself that I shall come off with flying colours."

"No doubt of it," replied Emma, absently, for she was thinking, with something like remorse, of her own attempt to cut short the days of one she should have loved, if she did not, and she was glad that she had been baffled. But her penitence did not extend to condemning her husband, nor tempt her to betray the shameful confidence he had reposed in her.

Light of nature, hard of heart, all the horror of this revelation did not strike her as it must have struck a person differently constituted.

She shrank with morbid dread from witnessing the suffering, the cause of which she knew, but to end it, and save the victim, never occurred to her as within the bounds of possibility.

She was silent so long that Brenton began to be annoyed, and he sharply asked:

"What are you thinking of, Emma? Are you condemning me for completing that in which you failed? If so, I think you are very unreasonable."

She flushed slightly and said:

"So it is; but I will not submit to be spoken to in that tone, Mr. Brenton. If I aid your questionable plans, I shall still exact from you the respect due to me as your wife."

Brenton shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"What does it matter? What is mine is yours, and you need have no fear that I will cheat you. The possession of this property is of great importance to me just now. The probability that it may soon fall to you will be worth a great deal to me in the business I am about to arrange, and that business involves the ruin of the man you are so determined to crush. If I spoke brusquely just now, I am sorry for it; but I interpreted your silence to mean condemnation, and I could not bear that from you."

She gave him a gracious smile, arose, and offering her hand said:

"I was not thinking of you at all. My thoughts

were all of Aunt Sarah, and—and what she might have to suffer before the end comes. I will go with you to Selwood, but I will not stay longer than you do. No, I will not; so let that suffice. My tact would fail me under the ordeal you would expose me to, and all would be ruined. I will aid you to carry out your plans in every other way, but that I cannot stand."

"Then I must arrange it so that I can stay more than a single day. A mere flying visit from you would only arouse suspicion, Emma."

"Fix it any way you will to avoid that, but I adhere to what I have said. Come, it is time to appear in the ball-room—all our set must be there by this time. Isn't my dress lovely? It is the crowning triumph of my Parisian wardrobe, and I have saved it for my last appearance here."

Brenton marvelled at the butterfly nature that could turn to a question of dress after such a discussion as they had held, but he duly admired the dress, and complimented the wearer on its becomingness.

To keep his wife in accord with himself was his present cue, and he played the part of the obsequious husband to an imperious and exacting wife, saying to himself:

"Patience—my day will come, and when it does I will make Emma understand that I am master of her and her fortunes. I wonder if she thinks I am to be ruled in this way throughout all the rest of my life."

On the following day Brenton and his wife went back. The honeymoon had exhausted its sweets, and now both of them were ready to grapple with the dark realities that lay before them.

The destruction of a good woman; the utter ruin and overthrow of a man who had earned the hatred of the wife by slighting her love, and the contempt of the husband by placing himself a second time in his ruthless hands.

In his own absence and that of Manvers, Brenton had employed as manager a man who, he knew, was not trusted by his friend; but in the

present crisis of affairs he cared little about it."

He intended to keep John Markley in his employment in some capacity, for the man was troubled with few scruples, and could be used as a convenient tool when it became necessary to employ him.

Manvers had returned three weeks before; had taken his wife to Selwood, and leaving her there went back to assume control of the house and to write his partner a sharp letter of remonstrance for placing such confidence in a man so little deserving it as he believed Markley to be.

Brenton did not reply to the letter save by a single line saying that he had faith in his agent, and that further explanation had better be deferred till they met.

Somewhat to his surprise, Brenton found Markley in charge, and the man said, in explanation:

"Manvers would not send me off before seeing you, as you had employed me; and as things looked straight enough to him, he had no excuse for doing it. He doesn't trust me any more than he did before, but he got a letter from his wife to-day, and he said he must go down at once. Of course, he had to leave things to me, as there was nobody else to take my place."

"Hum—anything wrong at Selwood? What took him off in such a hurry when he knew I was coming?"

"Old lady is ill—his wife frightened—so off he went. So much the better for you and me," and the last words were spoken very significantly.

"Yes—we can mature the plans I consulted you about. I am glad he is away. I shall be better prepared to meet him after our arrangements are settled."

Markley assented, and till a late hour of the night the two sat together in consultation.

In the meantime much had happened at Selwood to bring dismay into the happy household.

Kirke, more attracted every day by the charm that breathed around Constance Deering, had lingered with his old friends.

In fact, their house was as a second home to him, for he had been the ward of the professor and had prosecuted his studies under his care.

He was a small boy when he and his little patrimony were left to the guardianship of his tutor, and after the marriage of the latter he had lived as one of the family at Selwood till the death of his uncle called him away to take possession of the fine estate to which he had fallen heir.

Constance gave him no encouragement. She liked him, respected him, but he was not the style of a man she had ever fancied she could fall in love with.

He had been very good to her, but she would not return his kindness by accepting him only for the position and easy life he could give her.

But Kirke, in his matter-of-fact way, pursued his own course, ignoring her coldness—paying her constant though not obtrusive attentions; aiding her effectually in her new pursuit, for he had much artistic taste, and could draw accurately from nature.

In ten days she had completed a small landscape taken from one of the studies she had by her, made during her brief tour in the country the year before, and Kirke volunteered to sell it for her.

The wily Kirke went his way and came back in triumph, bearing with him twenty pounds as the remuneration for that effort, and a commission for another at the same price.

Never suspecting that he was himself the purchaser and the patron for whom the other one was designed, Constance was innocently delighted at her success.

"You are my good genius, Mr. Kirke," she thoughtlessly said, forgetful for the moment of her desire to hold him at such a distance as to

prevent him from committing himself in any way. "You helped me to make that painting better than it would have been without your assistance, and now you have actually sold it for much more than I dared to expect."

"I mean to be your good genius, Constance," he calmly replied. "I intend you to find out that I am your best friend—that some spiritual bond exists between us which cannot be broken without a great wrong to both of us. You do not know it yet, but it is true, and the knowledge will come to you. I have patience, I can wait, for I know that my reward will come. I understand you thoroughly, my dear girl, and I do not mean to hurry you; we will stick to friendship till the right time comes for something better—for it will come, mark my words, Constance."

She looked at him as if she thought him slightly demented, and laughingly said:

"If you will delude yourself, you must, I suppose, but you hardly understand me as well as you think, Mr. Kirke. Women are hard riddles to read."

"Many women are, because they are so capricious that they hardly understand themselves. You are not one of that class, and I am clairvoyant as to what will come to pass in the future. You will see."

"I shall see, of course, when it happens, but I do not accept you as a seer. How long is it since you assumed that character?"

"There is no assumption—I only foresee with regard to you and myself; but I will not bore you with the assertion of a claim you are not yet ready to admit. The time will come, though, and something tells me that it will not be very long. Do not think me presumptuous; wait and see—that is all I ask."

"Oh, I can wait with infinite patience for such a denouement as that," replied Constance, half vexed, half laughing; and she went away to display her newly acquired wealth to her new friends.

Both of them understood the source of her sudden success, but they were careful to keep Kirke's secret, for they had become interested in his success, and believed that the happiness of both parties would be secured if a marriage between them could be brought about.

"I will never try to make a match for anyone," said Mrs. Tardy to her husband; "that is meddling with fate and trifling with something too sacred to be influenced by outsiders; but if these two would only take a fancy to each other, there would be one more happy household in the world. Jimmy is not the handsomest man in the world, but he is good as gold, and he would try to make his wife a happy woman. Emma made a dreadful mistake when she threw him over."

"They would never have suited each other, and I think things are better as they are," said the professor, quietly. "Kirke is more taken with this young girl than he was with Emma, but as yet I see no signs on her part of any particular liking for him. He is a queer fellow, though, for he does not seem discouraged in the least."

Mrs. Tardy laughed.

"Somebody has said that 'all things come to us if we only have patience to wait.' Jimmy is acting on the belief, I suppose, and I can only hope that his waiting race may win."

The two were in their own room when this conversation took place.

The walls had been newly hung more than a week before, and both were delighted with the effect of the delicately tinted paper.

Yet the professor felt an unusual oppression on his brain, his eyes were dull and heavy, and a feeling of lassitude crept over him day by day.

No suspicion of the cause entered his mind, for he had read nothing on this subject, and was not aware of the newspaper discussion which had enlightened Emma with regard to a method of slow poisoning.

Mrs. Tardy was more changed than her husband.

The air of alertness which distinguished her

so lately was gone, and there was a sense of failure throughout her whole system for which she could not account.

Her complexion had grown almost waxen in its clearness, and there was a restless glitter in her eyes which indicated constant inward fever.

To allay this, she only added to the fire that consumed her, by drinking the wine Brenton had sent her, hoping that the use of this stimulant would restore her usual strength and activity.

Those around her saw that she was not as well as usual, but as she made no complaint, and was averse to the thought that serious indisposition could attack her, nothing was said on the subject.

So the days went by till the joyful one arrived on which Manvers and Agnes were expected.

The old lady brightened up, declared herself perfectly well, and arrayed herself in her best to receive them.

Radiant in youth and happiness, Agnes and her husband came among them once more, and for a few moments all was joyful excitement.

The story of Constance had been made known to them, as far as it could be by letter, and both were prepared to meet her with affectionate kindness.

Agnes thanked her in her sweetest manner for coming so opportunely to fill her place with the lonely old couple, and Constance felt that in her she had gained a new and most attractive friend.

But when the first excitement of meeting was over, and the two who had just returned had time to mark the changes that had taken place during their absence, both were painfully struck with the change in Mrs. Tardy's appearance.

"Have you been ill, aunt?" asked Agnes, suddenly. "If so, why did you not let me know? I would have come back to you at once."

"Ill? Nonsense! Why do you ask such a question as that, my dear? You know that I am never ill. I am as hardy as a pine-knot, and I expect to live to be a centenarian."

There was an irritated inflexion in her voice, but in spite of it the professor said:

"I am afraid Agnes is right, my dear, and that you are not quite well, though you will not admit it. I have noticed for several days past that you are looking strangely. You have a flush on your face as bright as if you were but sixteen, and your eyes have an unnatural lustre in them."

"Oh, if I am growing young and lovely, so much the better for me," replied the old lady, with an effort at jocularity she was far from feeling, for at that moment a deathly faintness overcame her, and she sank back in her chair.

Both Agnes and Constance sprang to her side, and Manvers hastened for a glass of water. In a few moments she sat up again, and said:

"Do not be alarmed—it is nothing—I feel quite well again. The idea that I can be sick from no cause at all is absurd. Come, Agnes, tell us about your tour; I know you were as happy as a fairy queen, but I want to know all about it from your own lips."

"My dear," said the professor, "before Agnes begins I must say that I am beginning to think that the air of this place no longer agrees with either of us. I have felt strangely heavy and dull lately, and I sometimes fear that some malarial influence is tainting the atmosphere around us."

"Tut, tut, old man, what nonsense you talk. Malaria on a place proverbial for its healthfulness. There has not been a case of fever in Selwood within the last six years. I have noticed that you looked drooping lately, but I supposed that one of your headaches was coming on. There can be nothing else the matter with you, and as to myself, I shall soon be all right."

Manvers looked from one to the other as they

spoke, and he clearly saw the change in both. A bright thought came almost as an inspiration to him, and he said:

"You mentioned in one of your letters that you had lately caused your bedroom to be newly papered. Are you aware, professor, that the mordant used in fixing some of the colours on wall paper is strongly impregnated with arsenic? Perhaps that is what is wrong with you. You may have been breathing poisonous vapours while you slept."

"That is it!" exclaimed the professor, with an air of conviction. "If I have read anything about it I had forgotten it; this heavy feeling came on me only lately—in fact, since the change in the room has been made, and I believe you are right, Julian, that it is due to the paper."

"If you will permit me to visit your room, Aunt Sally, and inspect the paper, I can tell if it is dangerous," said Manvers, turning to Mrs. Tardy.

Without a word Mrs. Tardy arose, and herself led the way to her apartments.

There was an expression of pain and doubt in her eyes, but she closed her lips firmly, resolved that they should never express the terrible thought which darted into her mind, and for which she took herself severely to task.

Manvers uttered an exclamation when he entered the room, and quickly asked:

"Who selected this paper for you, and why was it that you were not warned that to be at all safe it must be varnished?"

With great effort, Mrs. Tardy said:

"The hangings were a present from my niece, and I—I believe she chose them herself. But she would not have known—no, it is impossible that she could have been warned of their injurious qualities, and yet persisted in buying them. Young women are so heedless, and very likely she did not listen to what the clerk said."

"I am bringing no charge against Mrs. Brenton," said Manvers, gravely; "so it is unnecessary to defend her. She was struck with the beauty of the design, and ordered it in the heedless manner people often do such things. But the man who sold it to her should be brought to an account if he did not explain to her that on the walls of a sleeping room this paper might become fatal to those occupying it. This is why you and the professor are feeling ill, my dear madame, and I advise you to have the whole of it torn down at once and destroyed."

"Yes—yes—of course it shall be done," said Mrs. Tardy, in a bewildered way very unlike her usual decision of manner. "Dear me! dear me! just to think that in a civilised and Christian land such dangerous things are allowed to be sold."

"But the manufacturer does not conceal the deadly nature of his pigments, and a means of protection is always suggested, as I said before, by the use of varnish. That prevents the poisonous exhalations from entering the atmosphere. From what house did this paper come, professor? I will call and tell the clerk of his carelessness."

"The wrappings were burned, and I forget the name of the firm," said the professor; "but Emma will know from whom the purchase was made. It is lucky that you came back so soon, Julian, or serious mischief might have been the result. We will vacate the room at once, and to-morrow the paper shall be removed. I will commission you to select such as will be suitable to replace it when you go back."

"I think I can find something quite as pretty and far less injurious to health," replied Manvers, offering his arm to Mrs. Tardy to take her to the supper-table, the bell having just sounded.

As she took the arm of Manvers she said, with a faint smile:

"I am a far poorer creature than I thought, if my health can be seriously affected by sleeping a few nights in a tainted atmosphere. I admit now that I am ill—humiliating as it is to do so. I will call in Dr. Morton to-morrow, and see if he can help me to get rid of this feeling of weariness that overcomes me. Prof., who is far more delicate than I am, has stood this ordeal far better than I have."

"That is the common experience, I believe," replied Manvers; "a perfectly healthy organisation succumbs in a vitiated atmosphere much sooner than a less perfect one. No doubt Morton's treatment will soon restore your usual vigour to you, now that you admit that you need assistance."

Mrs. Tardy took her usual seat at the head of the table and poured out the tea; but her hands trembled, and more than once the cup she held came near falling.

She had no appetite and made no effort to eat, but seemed to have regained her spirits, and much gay talk went on among them, the old lady taking her part with her usual spirit.

As they were rising from the table she said:

"I must take a glass of my wine before I go. The tea is insipid to me, but the wine has never palled on my taste yet. Let us take a glass all around, and drink to the happiness and prosperity of the dear ones who have come back safe to us."

"Wine after tea-drinking, old lady!" exclaimed the professor. "I wonder at you. No, my dear, drink that execrable tippie yourself, since you think it agrees with you, but do not ask anyone else to partake of it, I beg. We will pray for all good gifts to our children, but we will not drink to them."

"Neither will I take any, then," said Mrs. Tardy, rejecting the decanter filled with what looked like liquid amber, which the attendant offered her.

Thinking she might miss the stimulant which of late she seemed so greatly to need, Constance suddenly said:

"I will join you, Mrs. Tardy. You need your wine, for you have eaten nothing, and you shall not reject it because you would have to drink alone."

The old lady nodded and smiled; another wine-glass of tiny dimensions was brought and filled, and Constance touched the edge of it to that of Mrs. Tardy.

With a beaming smile she said:

"Health and long life to you, dear friend, is what I drink with all my heart."

She lifted the wine to her lips, tasted it, and the glass fell suddenly to the floor, shivering into fragments.

A death-like paleness overspread her face, succeeded by a deep flush as she realised that she had broken one of a set of Bohemian glass highly prized by the mistress of the house.

"How careless I am!" she exclaimed. "I can never forgive myself. Oh, Mrs. Tardy, I am so sorry. What can I say to excuse myself to you?"

"Nothing, my dear," said the old lady, rather grimly. "I can be mistress of myself, though china falls, or rather, glass; and that was an exquisite little thing in its way. The set was sent to me by Emma's father; and, by the way, it was the only thing he ever did send me. A curious present to make to one who, at that time, had no wine to pour into them. Umph, this is a queer world, taken at its best."

She called the servant, ordered the fragments gathered up and removed, and then patting Constance on the cheek as she took the offered arm of Manvers, said:

"There is little harm done, child, so don't look downcast. I have still eleven left."

Constance looked more troubled and annoyed at the accident than seemed necessary, and Kirke, who watched her with such unflinching interest, saw that she was deeply disturbed by some other cause than the mere breaking of a wine glass, however valuable it might be. He watched his opportunity to draw her aside, and for once she seemed anxious to allow him a chance to speak with her in private.

When they were again in the parlour and he came to her side and said:

"I feel as if we were de trop here," she quietly replied.

"I have the same feeling, for, after a meeting, near relatives have always much to say to each other in which a stranger has no part. Let us be romantic for once, Mr. Kirke, and take a moonlight promenade under the trees. I have

something to confide to you—and to—to consult you about."

"I was sure there was something to tell," he said, composedly, "and I am glad that you have selected me as your confidant. The professor and Mrs. Tardy are both anxious to tell Julian of his partner's conduct toward you, and put him on his guard against some short turn on him made by that astute individual. Our absence will be a relief, so let us go at once."

He moved forward at once, offering her his arm, which she accepted, and when they were under the shadow of the overhanging trees he said:

"Something was wrong with the wine. It has been drugged, and no wonder, when it passed through the hands of Brenton—though, until this evening, I never suspected him of such turpitude as that. How did you know it, for he would not venture to put much poison in so delicate a wine as that."

"No, there is not much, as you say, and but for the most curious chance imaginable I should never have detected it. Let me tell my story in my own way, and you will see how I came to do so."

"I had a friend who is now dead—she would have been beautiful if her complexion had been clear and blooming; her features were finely cut, and her eyes were expressive, but she was so very sorrowful that the effect was marred. She had an almost insane desire to remedy the defect, and she finally used arsenic mixed with wine."

"I said all I could to induce her to give up so fatal an experiment, but she would not. She improved her appearance but she destroyed her health."

"I, more than once, tasted the wine she used, and thus I was able to detect the taste of arsenic in that which touched my lips this evening. The sudden tremor that seized me caused me to drop the glass. That is all."

"All! and is it not enough? Good heavens! to think of any creature so base as to compass the death of so good a woman as Mrs. Tardy, that he may gain possession of her estate. That is Brenton's motive, of course, for he can have no other. We must prevent this, Constance; we can expose him and save her, and the analysis of the wine will prove that both he and his wife have made an attempt on her life. She through that poisonous paper, he through his infernally drugged wine."

Constance clung to his arm as he made a movement towards the house, as if intending to denounce the crime at once, and breathlessly said:

"We will save her, but not by exposing them. It would be too dreadful to that dear, good woman to know that such a thing had been attempted. Let us also save her from that, and—and—if you will be guided by me, I will—yes—I will try to feel something warmer for you. Yes, I will try, but you must wait."

Her voice failed her through excessive agitation, and he found that she was trembling violently.

Without saying a word he clasped his strong arm around her, and turning from the house, sought the little pavilion, which, of late, had been used by her as a studio.

It was an octagon room, well lighted, with an inlaid floor of different kinds of wood forming a graceful mosaic.

An easel in the centre of the apartment, with a table and a few comfortable chairs, completed the furnishing. On one of the latter Kirke placed her, and then taking her hand in his, earnestly said:

"The hope you give me is very precious to me, Constance, and to win your entire regard there is no effort I could not make. Develop your ideas to me, and if I can, I promise to accept them and to act on them in this most unheard-of crisis. Save Mrs. Tardy we must, and if it can be done without betraying the wickedness of her niece, and of the man she has married, so much the better for them."

Constance recovered composure, and after reflecting a few moments, said:

"I think we can do that, and we owe it to Mrs.

Tardy to keep from her every suspicion of such a horror as this. In her present state of health the shock of learning the truth might be almost fatal to her. Besides, the analysis of the wine might prove nothing, for the quantity of arsenic used is almost inappreciable. The poisoning was intended to be very slow, that suspicion might not be aroused, and but for the other supposed attempt to get rid of her she would scarcely have suffered from it yet."

"Then you think that the husband and wife did not act in collusion?"

"No; and I cannot believe that Mrs. Brenton intended to do her aunt an injury. That would be too horrible an accusation to bring against her. We have to deal with him alone in this affair, and we can circumvent him without exposure."

"In what way? After the promise you have given me, of course I am anxious to follow your lead, but I cannot see how my old friend is to be protected from other attempts on her life, even if this one fails. We must risk nothing for her, Constance."

"Nor will we. Knowing what we do, we can guard her after the present danger is past. My plan is this: I have assisted Mrs. Tardy in housekeeping since her health began to fail, and I have access to the pantry in which the wine is kept. I will remove the bottles left. A dozen came, and half of them have been emptied. Mrs. Tardy uses it in place of water; it's very weak, and she fancies it will restore her strength, as it did once a long time ago."

"I fear that you will get yourself in a scrape by that plan of action. And there is the decanter more than half full to be accounted for."

"She will not need wine before luncheon in the morning, and you must get a supply which can be used in place of the other. I will find means to substitute your wine for that which is thrown away. You may rely on my tact to accomplish that."

"Your plan is simple enough, and I will set out at daylight on the duty you have assigned me. I know a place where pure native wines are sold, and I shall find what we need there."

"How good you are," exclaimed Constance. "Until now, I never knew how much I could like you. Only help me in this, Mr. Kirke, and I shall be forced to like you best of all the world."

"Say love in place of like, and I shall be contented," said her lover, again attempting to take the hand she had withdrawn from him; but she sprang up, fitted through the door, and said:

"Enough is as good as a feast." Let us go in now, and on the way we will settle how the new wine is to be made to replace the old."

(To be Continued.)

MYSTERIOUS LIGHTS.

FROM time to time the West coast of Wales seems to have been the scene of mysterious lights. In the fifteenth century, and again on a larger scale in the sixteenth, considerable alarm was created by fires that "rose out of the sea." Writing in January, 1694, the rector of Dolgelly stated that sixteen ricks of hay and two barns had been burnt by "a kindled exhalation which was often seen to come from the sea." Passing over alleged appearances in March, 1875, a letter by the late Mr. Picton Jones appeared in *Bye-gones* p. 198, giving an account of curious lights which he had witnessed at Pwllheli, and now we have a statement from Towyn that within the last few weeks "lights of various colours have frequently been seen moving over the estuary of the Dysynni river and out at sea. They are generally in a northern direction, but sometimes they hug the shore, and move at a high velocity for miles towards Aberdovey, and suddenly disappear." Can any authorities upon natural phenomena furnish further information on the subject?

HOMELY GIRLS.

"How did that homely woman contrive to get married?" is not unfrequently remarked of some good domestic creature, whom her husband regards as the apple of his eye, and in whose plain face he sees something better than beauty. Pretty girls who are vain of their charms are rather prone to make observations of this kind, and a consciousness of the fact that flowers of loveliness are often left to pine on the stem, while weeds of homeliness go off readily, is no doubt at the bottom of the sneering question. The truth is, that most men prefer homeliness and amiability to beauty and caprice. Handsome women are sometimes very hard to please. They are apt to overvalue themselves; and in waiting for an immense bid, they occasionally overstep the market. Their plain sisters, on the contrary, aware of their personal deficiencies, generally lay themselves out to produce an agreeable impression—and in most cases they succeed. They don't aspire to capture paragons with princely fortunes, but they are willing to take anything respectable.

CRAZY STRANGE.

THE summer sun, blazing hotly over the field of waving grass, of stiff, green corn, with the tassels of yellow silk moving lazily in the breeze, over field, wood, and stream, looked also into the infirmary of the alms-house at Renton, and through the uncurtained window fell upon the pauper sufferers.

One by one it kissed with burning touch the fevered faces upon the coarse pillows, till it reached a cot in a far corner, where a nurse was busied about one of the paupers, by name, in that sad place, Crazy Strange.

Where she got the name no one knew; what other one she bore, no one guessed; where she came from, no one had discovered.

Thirteen years before, when the first snow of the winter was whitening the ground, a farmer had driven to the alms-house with an unconscious woman, wearing a wrapper over a night-dress, and dainty slippers upon unstockinged feet.

The farmer had picked her up on the road, and left her with the matron. Out of the deep, deep swoon she awakened to a dull insanity, never violent, but wandering always.

She could do little at first, but was trained to mental duty, and so for thirteen weary years had lived a tread-mill existence, working in the alms-house.

The pretty wrapper, the dainty slippers, were long before worn out. The brown hair had grown grey, the large blue eyes dim, the fair brow was lined with wrinkles.

Uncomplaining, gentle and docile, the fair, unconscious woman had aged rapidly, living in appearance more than double the thirteen years spent in the Benton alms-house.

As the summer sun crept slowly up her pillow she opened her eyes. They had been wildly delirious for many days, dull and idiotic for many years, and the nurse was startled to see the steady light of reason in her gaze.

"How came I here?" the patient asked.

"You've been sick!"

"Sick? How long?"

"About two weeks!"

"And where am I?"

"In the Benton alms-house!"

"An alms-house?" was the startled cry; "and I have been here two weeks!"

"Bless you, you've been in the alms-house thirteen years!"

A wailing cry rang out on the summer air, but sounds of misery were only too common in that abode of suffering, and no one heeded but the nurse. Some womanly compassion still left, she said to a child who was playing near the window:

"Go and ask Dr. Ashurst to come here directly."

"Dr. Budd is in the office," said the child. "I want Dr. Ashurst. Find him. For," she muttered, pulling her head in, "he was here when she came."

She talked soothingly to the patient, who lay in mute misery, seemingly stunned by her wakening to consciousness. Presently a tall, elderly gentleman came in.

"You sent for me, Mrs. Jones?" he said.

"Yes, sir," was the whispered reply; "I think Crazy Strange must be dying. She's come to her senses."

In a moment the doctor's fingers clasped the slender wrist of the patient, and he looked kindly into the blue eyes that met his own, calmly, but with a terrible depth of woe in their expression.

"The nurse tells me I have been here thirteen years," the faint voice said. "Can you tell me how I came?"

The doctor told her all he knew.

"How far are we from the river?"

Dr. Ashurst started.

"Fifty miles at least in a direct line," he said.

"Do you remember the burning of a steamer called the 'Reindeer'?"

"Yes."

"I must have been saved from that. I was on board with my husband. He was very ill, threatened with consumption. I remember my terror at the fire, the confusion, the hasty snatching of some clothing, for it was night. I thought it was all yesterday."

The doctor, inured to dreadful revelations, was moved deeply by the patient's pathos of the woman's voice as she told her story.

"Do you remember a locket you wore?" he asked.

"Yes. It had my daughter's picture and hair. My little girl was five years old when we left her with my husband's mother."

"I have the locket for you. We usually lock up such valuables till the owner calls for them."

"Doctor, am I dying?"

"I think not. Your pulse is stronger than it was yesterday, and the fever has left you, but without prostration."

"Can I ever be well enough to go home?"

"I think you can. Shall I write for you?"

"No; I will go back unannounced. Who can tell the changes there. There may be another in my place, and I have been a pauper thirteen years. I will not shame them."

And she gently persisted in her resolve.

The summer sun was five weeks older when it shone down with the rays of setting glory on a cemetery in a village home.

Over the wide, dusty road leading there, crept a feeble, grey-haired woman, almost spent—one who had come hundreds of weary miles begging her way.

Foot-sore and spent, she looked at a superb house set back in a wide garden, the home of luxury—her home.

Not even one given her by a husband's love, but her own fair inheritance from her father.

She looked wistfully at the open windows, the vine-wreathed porch, but whispered:

"There may be another in my place," and passed on slowly.

One search must be made. She must journey to the city of the dead and see if her husband had perished on that awful night, that seemed to her but just passed.

Was that awful blank of years the blank of death to him?

The wife who had worshipped him, who had left even her only child to seek health-giving air for him, and to give him undivided care, crawled on to the cemetery to seek the tombstones there for his name.

But nearly at her journey's end she sank down exhausted at the base of a tall shaft.

Dizzy, trembling, she looked up as footsteps came near, and saw a slender, beautiful girl leading a feeble old man forward.

He was grey, too, and weak, and when he sat upon the iron bench near the tall shaft he trembled with exhaustion.

"I shall not come many times more, Cora," he said, gently. "My eyes are dim, and my strength fails me every day. But to-night I will tell you the story of your mother's death. We have not told you before that she does not lie here."

"Not lie here?"

"No, child. Your mother sleeps far off from here under the waters. She was lost in the 'Reindeer.' For weeks after the fearful night when the steamer was burned I lay at death's door; but death was not merciful. He took my darling, and left the wreck of a man, crippled, feeble, suffering, but living."

"Oh, father, do not speak as if you regretted your life. Think what it has been to me—friend, companion, teacher, father and mother in one."

"Cora, dear, that was my only comfort. But for you I would have prayed to die. Little one, you may live to know—Heaven grant that you do—such love as your mother felt for me, to gain such love as mine for her. We were utterly happy together. We idolised each other, and so our Heavenly Father parted us, to take her to his own bliss, and raise my heart to Him."

The ragged wayfarer behind the great marble shaft rose painfully.

For one moment she stood irresolute, longing to throw herself upon that faithful heart that still held her sacred.

But seeing the worn face, she saw, too, the delicate girl tenderly supporting the grey, drooping head.

Every detail of the simple yet costly dress, the refined beauty seemed burning upon her brain, as she said, softly:

"I have been a pauper thirteen years. I will not shame them."

But as she moved slowly away, she felt her limbs fail, her brain reel, and sank senseless upon the ground.

The involuntary cry she gave reached the ears of the mourner.

"See, Cora! It is a woman—a beggar! Poor creature! Have you the wine you brought for me?"

The girl went quickly upon her errand of mercy.

She had been taught to follow all the womanly impulses of generosity and pity in her gentle heart, and she softly touched the unconscious figure, putting off the shabby bonnet and loosening the ragged shawl.

Her father tottered to her side and raised the feeble head upon his arm, while the wine was put to the pale lips.

So wakening, she must have been more than human to control the word that rose to her lips.

"Robert! Robert!"

One great gasping cry escaped him, and for a moment his heart-throbs threatened to suffocate him.

White as death, he said, with trembling lips:

"Margaret! Can it be Margaret?"

"I tried to creep away. But I shall not shame you in my grave."

"Shame me! You? Margaret! my wife! Why have you let me mourn you as dead?"

"I have been crazy, they tell me; a crazy pauper in an almshouse thirteen years."

"Oh! mother! mother!"

In choking sobs Cora spoke the sacred name she had been taught to hold in deepest reverence, and she knelt beside the ragged beggar, showering kisses upon the white face, while scalding tears fell from her eyes.

It was the father who first recovered composure. The sun was over, and the twilight would soon be gone.

"Cora," the father said, "go to the house, dear, and send servants with a litter. Quick, dear. We must take your mother home."

The girl sprang to her feet at once. Only the wide road and the garden were to be crossed after she was a few hundred yards from the gate of the cemetery.

She sped over these like a fawn and entered the house. Her grandmother was there, and the strange story was briefly told.

Servants were called, a litter hurriedly pre-

pared, and the old lady went to prepare food and comforts for the wanderer, while Cora led the men to the cemetery.

Beside the tall shaft where her mother's name had told the world of her death for thirteen years, Cora could see the two figures, as she had left them, her mother lying still upon the grass, her father kneeling to support her head. But her father's figure leaned heavily upon the monumental stone.

"He has fainted. The shock was too great for him," she said. "Lift my mother up. Has she fainted too?"

But the men lifting the figure did not speak. Too well they read the rigid lines in that pallid face, the dead weight of the slender figure.

"Tenderly one of them said:

"You'd best go back, Miss Cora, and tell your grandma, we will carry them home. Your papa is—has fainted."

But she shook her head, and with white, shaking lips watched as they laid the two side by side upon the litter, and calling help from the cemetery lodge, lifted the heavy burden.

So after thirteen years of exile they carried Margaret home, cold and dead, with the faithful heart that had lived mourning for her pulseless and still beside her.

But who shall say they were not happy in this, that after their long separation they died, clasped in each other's arms, looking into each other's eyes, with a farewell for each other none save themselves and the angels heard.

Under the tall shaft they lie, side by side, and Cora comes every day to hang flowers over their grave, and mourn for the father she loved, the mother she never knew.

And Dr. Ashurst—who, after much search found out where his patient had wandered, when, still weak and ill, she left the almshouse unknown to anyone—says yet that of all the pitiful stories his long service in Benton has told him, there is no other so sad as that of Crazy Strange.

HOPE ON.

THE darkest cloud will vanish before the sun, and the heaviest night give place to a coming morn. There is no grief so profound that it cannot be alleviated, no sorrow so great that it cannot be lessened, no mourning so bitter that it cannot be turned into joy and gladness. Hope is ever present to administer her consolation. She lives amid trials and disappointments, and shines more brightly for the darkened atmosphere in which she dwells. She comes unbidden to man in his low estate, as a comforter and friend.

In losses and crosses, borne upon the swift tide of prosperity, or driven by the ebbing currents of adversity; amid the strife of tongue, or hailed by the acclamations of the multitude, she bids him rise superior to all, and wait patiently the issues of an All-wise Providence. Hope on, toil on, bide the time, the Lord is not unrighteous to forget the work or the labour of love. He knows all, and the appointed time is in His hand. Wait patiently for Him.

THE LITTLE SHOES DID IT.

A YOUNG man, who had been reclaimed from the vice of intemperance, was called upon to tell how he was led to give up drinking. He arose, but looked for a moment very confused. All he could say was: "The little shoes, they did it!" With a thick voice, as if his heart was in his throat, he kept repeating this. There was a stare of perplexity on every face, and at length some thoughtless young people began to titter. The man, in all his embarrassments, heard this sound, and rallied at once. The light came into his eyes with a flash—he drew himself up and addressed the audience: the choking went from his throat.

"Yes, friends," he said, in a voice that cut its way, clear as a deep-toned bell, "whatever you may think it, I've told you the truth—the little

shoes did it. I was a brute and a fool; strong drink had made me both, and starved me into the bargain. I suffered; I deserved to suffer; but I didn't suffer alone—no man does who has a wife and child, for the woman gets the worst abuse. But I am no speaker to enlarge on that; I'll stick to the little shoes. It was one night, when I was all but done for, the saloon-keeper's child holding out her feet for her father to look at her fine new shoes.

"It was a simple thing; but, friends, no fist ever struck me such a blow as those little new shoes. They kicked reason into me. What business have I to clothe others with fineries, and provide not even coarse clothing for my own, but let them go bare? said I; and there outside was my shivering wife and blue-chilled child, on a bitter cold night. I took hold of the little one with a grip and saw her chilled feet. Men, fathers, if the little shoes smote me, what must little feet do? I put them, cold as ice, to my breast; they pierced me through. Yes, the little feet walked right into my heart and away walked my selfishness. I had a trifle of money left; I bought a loaf of bread and then a pair of little shoes. I never tasted anything but a bit of that bread all the Sabbath-day, and went to work like mad on Monday, and from that day I have spent no more money at the public-house. That's all I've got to say—it was the little shoes that did it."

A GRIEVOUS FAULT.

To marry one man while loving and loved by another is about the most grievous fault a woman can commit. It is a sin against delicacy, against kindness and truth. It involves double treachery and cruelty. It involves wounding the spirit, withering the heart, perhaps blighting and soiling the soul of one who is abandoned and betrayed.

It involves the speedy disenchantment of the one who is mocked by the shadow where he was promised the substance, and who grasps only the phantom, soulless beauty, and the husk and shell, the skeleton of a dead affection.

It entails ceaseless deception at home and abroad, by day and by night, at down-sitting and uprising; deception in every relation; deception in the tenderest and most endearing moments of existence. It makes the whole of a life weary, degraded, and unrewarded. A right-minded woman can scarcely lay a deeper sin upon her soul, or one more certain to bring down a fearful expiation.

THE DUKE OF NORFOLK'S WEDDING.

AMONG the Duke of Norfolk's wedding presents perhaps the most interesting and appropriate was that of the corporation of her Majesty's Heralds, the Duke of Norfolk, as Earl Marshal of England, being their hereditary patron. This very beautiful specimen of Gothic orfèverie was designed by the eminent artist, Mr. Bentley, of John Street, Adelphi, under the direction of York Herald. The form is that of an earl marshal's baton, about two feet in length, having at the top an earl's coronet in chiselled gold, à jour, in front of a black enamelled band. Above this the stock finishes with the cap and strawberry leaves, indicative of ducal rank. The shaft is entwined throughout its length with a cord in matte gold tied in nuptial knots, forming compartments, which are filled alternately with enamels of the Mowbray Arms (a white lion rampant in a red field) and the white and red roses of York and Lancaster. On the disk at the bottom are the Duke's arms in enamel. The lower end of the baton bears an appropriate inscription.

The workmanship throughout is worthy of the reputation of the Crown goldsmiths, Messrs. Garrard, of the Haymarket. A few particulars relative to the office of Earl Marshal of England may serve to explain the decorations of the baton. Gilbert de Clare, A.D. 1135, is the first

recorded Lord Marshal of England, and Thomas Mowbray was made the first Earl Marshal by Richard II. in 1333, from whom the present Duke of Norfolk derives the office by direct descent.

The coronets used as ornaments at the top of the baton are of course quite modern in form, as English heralds did not until comparatively recent times attempt to distinguish the different degrees of the titled nobility by either coronets or helmets. The baton in this, as in almost every detail except size, differs intentionally from the regulation form, which is not unlike a piece of picture rod flattened at the ends.

POOR OLD ENGLAND.

(As painted by certain patriots of the period.)

I'm a very fine old lady, and the wonder of the world,
On every sea my keels float free, my banner is unfurled!
But neither pluck, nor power, nor luck my stout old soul preserves
From frequent fits of fidgets, and from bad attacks of nerves.

Despite my flag the world will wag, at a perplexing pace,
A fact, you see, that taxes me to hold the foremost place;
It's mine by right, but then to fight, and keep up fleets and things,
Is a burden that no end of work and botheration brings.

In statu quo? Precisely so. I'm very well content;
As I've all I want at present, new arrangements I'd prevent;
Why can't all parties do the like, in peace and quiet dwell,
And so preserve the state of things that suits my book so well?

But bless you, no! They want to "grow!" to grab where grab they can,
And some have got the cheek to say that used to be my plan;
Perhaps, but I know better now. Why can't they learn of me
To settle down on their own lots and lived contentedly?

But when they balk my little schemes, or get into my way,
Block paths which I desire to use, or may desire some day;
It puts me dreadfully out, it makes me very cross,
I can't look on at other's gain which may portend my loss.

I've got a lot of land about, a longish way from home;
Others are bound to cross my paths wherever they may roam;
But then they shouldn't hang about, or settle near my tracks,
As though they thought my game was good, and aimed at going snacks.

Ah! snacks, that's it. There's not a bit of pickings I have got
But what they'd like to nibble at, or maybe bolt the lot.
They're welcome, quite, to forage for themselves in other places,
But then they ought to cry "Hold hard!" whenever they spy my traces.

—Punch.

Four things are required in a wife—virtue in her heart, modesty in her face, gentleness on her lips, and industry in her hands.

Misfortunes are troublesome at first, but when there is no remedy but patience, custom makes them easy to us, and necessity gives us courage.

POOR LOO.

By the Author of "Dan's Treasure," "Clytie Cranbourne," "The Golden Bowl," etc.

CHAPTER LIV.

TORN FROM HER ANCHOR.

Alas! what stay is there in human state?
Or who can shun inevitable fate? DRYDEN.

"WHAT a strange trouble of the soul there is upon me to-night," mused Lizzie, as she turned away after speaking to Loo. "The stars and moon seem nearer to me than they have ever done before, and the rising storm seems to bring a message from the restless waters. I wonder if it is true that the spirits of the dead communicate with those of the living, or is Donald near me. I never knew until I left him how much I loved him—how dear he was to me; but it is all so far off. I feel as though I had lived a lifetime since I left the Abbey. It is getting cold, I must get back to my lodgings."

And she drew her shawl more tightly round her shoulders and walked on to the foot of the pier, intending to retrace her steps by keeping by the river side for a short distance, then turn to the right and strike across the end of the green to the small row of houses in one of which she lived, and that did not command a view of the sea.

At the foot of the pier however she paused to lean over the side of it and looked into a fishing boat that now in the fitful moonlight seemed like a dark sea monster clinging to the side of the pier, it being indeed moored there, and she was turning away thinking what hard lives the poor men who worked it must lead, when something like a thick shawl was thrown over her head, her arms were pinioned behind her, she could not utter a sound or cry, and her struggles only seemed to make the suffocating pressure upon her the stronger.

She could hear nothing but the sound of rushing water; she could see nothing; she had been lifted off her feet, then came the sensation of going down, down until she must have reached a boat, perhaps the very fishing smack she had been looking at, for she felt it moving up and down, and her arms now being free she tried to pull the covering from her head, for she seemed to be choking for want of air, but she could not, and though she fought and struggled the sense of suffocation at length overcame her, and she lost consciousness.

When she opened her eyes again the covering had been removed from her head, and the cold night air was blowing chilly upon her face.

She was still on the water, she felt the motion of the boat; more than that, she felt the spray now and then dashing over her, but the moon had disappeared, and the darkness was so dense that only the light at the masthead that seemed like a speck, and made the darkness still more complete, was visible.

"Where am I? Why am I here?" she moaned, but a strong hand held her, an arm clasped itself round her waist, though she struggled to be free from it, and a voice whispered in her ear:

"Don't be afraid, Loo darling, I will take care of you."

She tried to protest, but the sound of her voice was lost in the rising storm and she felt there was nothing for her but to wait.

Singularly enough she felt but little fear in her perilous position; life had so few charms, so little left for her that the near or possible presence of death did not appal or unnerve her as in happier moments it might have done.

That she was the victim of a mistake flashed upon her mind at once; the man at her side was a stranger, and called her by a name which she did not recognise, but then she had been the victim of a mistake from her infancy; odd if the same fate followed and took her to the grave.

All this she thought as the clumsy fish-smelling boat made its way through the swelling, surging waters, while the wind whistled and

howled amid its ropes and tore its sails as though resenting its presence with its unwilling freight upon its evil mission.

A few solitary lights far away showed where the land lay, but they were hurrying away from them, and the helpless girl breathed a silent prayer to her heavenly father for protection, then closed her eyes, and numbed with cold and utter helplessness, fell into a condition of semi-consciousness, that was neither sleep nor wakefulness, but a mixture of both.

How time passed she did not know.

Questioned, and she would have said she thought it must be many hours, for the storm had increased, the clumsy boat tossed like a log upon the angry waters; though some tarpaulin had been pulled over her by the man seated at her side she was wet to the very skin, while water seemed to pour into the boat at such a rate that it took all the skill and courage that the men who worked her possessed to keep her head to the wind and bale out the water.

And through it all the dense, pitchy darkness was the most terrible.

Oh, for light! Light to see death when it came upon them.

Lizzie felt that to die in the dark, with a black sky, a black sea, without even seeing the face of the wretch who had unprovoked brought her to such a doom, was most horrible, worse than the most horrible tragedy that daylight or light of any kind could witness; but she was numbed: something of the same feeling that had come over her mother when she leaped from the deck of the "Lurline" and lost her child in the sea must have come over that child now, and, was the sea going to be more sure of its prey this time? would it be again thwarted or yield up its victim only when it gave up its dead?

Had Loo been here as Herbert Dorset thought she was, she must have died of sheer fright, for in addition to fear of the elements would have been added the maddening terror which from childhood had clung to her with regard to himself, and that would now have made her jump into the water at the first opportunity rather than trus to this tender mercy.

It was the dread lest she should attempt this that made him keep such a firm hold upon the girl.

But it was needless. Lizzie would not shrink at death, but neither would she seek the grim creditor that claims us all, and she sat perfectly still without a reproach or cry or moan until she was aroused from her state of lethargy by one of the men in the boat shouting:

"Ship ahoy!"

Some answer was given, there was a good deal of parleying, from which the girl gathered that they had been expected some time before, that the ship was riding at anchor, and they had great anxiety about the still growing storm, and after this, with much difficulty, making no effort at self-help or resistance, Lizzie was lifted on deck of the vessel, and carried down to the cabin, where the sudden warmth seemed to make her faint and paralyse her numbed limbs, and the glare of light to momentarily blind her.

A glass of something steaming and hot was put to her lips, the smell being strong and to her taste offensive; she would have refused and pushed it away, but the man who offered it in an authoritative tone said:

"Drink, it will do you good," and she obeyed.

He was right: her nerves began to tingle, her limbs lost their stiffness, the rum and water and warm room revived her, wet and cold as her clothes still were, and she was going to ask some questions as to the reason of her being brought there, when the man whom she presumed had been her captor appeared upon the scene.

At first Herbert Dorset rubbed his eyes, thinking the sight deceived him, then, looking at this dark, beautiful woman again, he asked:

"Where did you come from? Where is Loo?"

"Are you the man who brought me here?" asked Lizzie, rising to her feet, her wet garments clinging to her fine form, and her dark eyes flashing upon him till he felt himself cower.

"I—I never meant to bring you; where did you come from? I brought Loo—Lucile Travers, whom I have known from her childhood; you are mocking me."

"Mocking you!" with supreme disdain. "You go like a thief in the night to steal a woman from her home, and then you must make a mistake and take a stranger; send me back to Little Bampton at once, from whence you brought me, or beware of the consequences; my friends are rich and powerful, and if you harm me, will not spare me."

"I don't understand it," exclaimed Herbert Dorset, tearing his hair from very rage and vexation; "are you the girl who stood on the pier at Little Bampton an hour ago and that I brought here?"

"I don't know how long it is ago, to me it seems a whole night," bitterly; "but I was standing on the pier alone when two cowards crept behind, muffled and pinioned me; I have been nearly suffocated and half drowned; now I am here and demand to know the reason of it?"

"There has been a mistake, miss. I am very sorry. I intended to have brought another girl here. I was told she was on the sands, between the crescent and the pier; you are about the same height, but she is slight and fair; how could I have made such a mistake?"

"The girl you sought for was on the sands, poor child. I spoke to her; she seemed miserable enough without your aid; now, the only reparation you can make is to send me back whence you brought me, at once."

"You will betray me," suspiciously.
"No, I will not, unless you seek to entrap the girl you thought you had captured; but there must be no delay."

"You'll not get back to-night, miss," said the seaman who had forced her to drink the grog and who was the captain of the yacht; "there's such a storm brewing that we'll not be able to lift anchor or spread a stitch of sail, and no boat could live in it. I much doubt if the lubbers who brought you here will get back to-night. It will be through the Lord's mercy that we any of us see the morning."

Lizzie looked at Herbert Dorset with a glance which plainly said, "You have done this," and he, covering his face with his hands, groaned in his mortification and fear.

Life was dear to him as to anyone, but the bitterness of death would be as nothing in comparison to the conviction that Loo had escaped him and that never in time or eternity would he call her his own.

As he thus sat, the girl whom he had so violently brought here looked at him with contempt, he was so mean in his dastardliness, so weak in his failure; and turning to the sailor as though he at any rate were a man, she asked:

"Is there any woman on board besides myself?"

"No, miss," was the reply.
For a moment she bit her lip savagely, then, ignoring Herbert's presence, she said:

"Will you promise to send me on shore in the morning? You see I have been brought here by mistake; and, though I am not afraid," and her fine eyes flashed, and her noble figure seemed instinct with dauntless dignity, till the man who looked on her felt awed and cowed by it, "still," she went on, "this is no place for me."

"If we are spared through this storm, and a boat can take you ashore, miss, you shall go," replied the man, "and while you're here we'll take the best care we can of you," he replied.

"Thank you," she answered.
And then, touching Herbert on the arm, he led him out of the cabin.

George Gibbons, the captain of the yacht, had pledged his word to the lady that she should be safe, and he meant to keep it, unless Father Neptune proved too ruthless for them, in which case they would all share the same fate.

And Lizzie, being thus left alone, wrapped herself up in her wet shawl; there was nothing dry at hand, and her clothes also were wet, and curling herself up in a corner of the divan that was fixed on one end of the tiny room, tried to sleep.

But the noise of wind and water and creaking masts and straining anchor were too much for her, while the sound of hurrying footsteps overhead told her that it was no imaginary danger, but that their very lives were at stake.

Morning dawned at last, though only a few streaks of light reached the terrified helpless girl.

The vessel had tossed from side to side, plunged from stem to stern like a horse trying to toss its rider, but now, as the girl, clinging to the articles of furniture, was trying to make her way to the foot of the ladder to reach the deck, a lull, and a violent jerk such as she had not felt before, came, then there was a soft, floating pause, broken at length by the shrieks of the men.

The yacht had slipped or parted with her anchors, and the waves were now driving her with unerring speed towards the shore.

"What is the matter? Has anything happened?" she asked, creeping at length on deck and touching the captain's arm.

"Only that we're going to land you, miss," he replied, grimly, "though I can't say in what fashion."

But his face was pale and grim, and he passed a coil of rope round the girl's waist as he spoke, to save her from being washed overboard.

CHAPTER LV.

"THE DEBT IS PAID."

How'er it be, it seems to me
"Tis only noble to be good;
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

TENNISON.

"A lady has been lost," said Robert Marker, as soon as he had taken Loo and Mabel by the hand and brought them by the sheltered side of the pier where the wind being south-west just passed over their heads.

"Ah!" exclaimed Loo, eagerly; "tell me about it, I could not sleep for thinking of her. Was it the lady who has walked about alone for more than a week past, and that spoke to me last night?"

"I expect so," was the reply; "that gentleman," indicating the yellow-haired man a few paces off, "is staying at the same hotel with me; it was he who spoke to us last night, Loo. It seems that after leaving us he proceeded along the pier and was just in time to see a girl lowered—he thought against her will—into a large boat or fishing smack, which at once put out to sea; he ran and shouted, tried to get a boat to follow, but the storm was commencing, no one would trust him with a boat or go with him; he went to the lady's lodgings, but she had not returned, and he is now nearly beside himself, for he cannot think who has taken her."

"Oh, I know," said Loo, in great agitation, "it is Herbert Dorset. He mistook her for me; he passed by the place where I was seated with another man not many minutes before you found me. I heard him say, 'We must take her without a cry.' I knew that he meant me, and I nearly fainted with fear. The young lady had spoken to me and walked towards the pier but a little while before. I have thought of it all the night while the storm was raging; what can be done?"

"Stop here a minute."
Then Robert Marker approached the fair-haired man and spoke with him for a time, bringing him at last to Loo and Mabel, and introducing him to them as "Lord Duncan."

At the first glance at Loo the young man started, but he was too absorbed with one devouring purpose to follow out the idea her face suggested, and after he bowed he asked:

"You saw the lady for whom I mistook you last night?"

"Yes, I think so," replied the girl; "she was about my height, her eyes were large and dark, and her face was pale, but she was beautiful."

"And you know the man who took her away?"

"I know the man who I think did so, but he mistook her for me if he did it, and he will not

hurt her; he will bring her back again; he is bad enough, but I don't think he would injure her. She will be safe if the storm spares her."

"If?"
At that moment a shout above the roar of the tempest was echoed along the shore, and leaving their sheltered position they all tried to look out at sea and ascertain the cause of the excitement.

The lifeboat had done its work gallantly, and had rescued the crew of a fishing smack that had been out all night, but here it was powerless.

For, coming straight on, driven before the wind, with bare poles, making no answer to her helm, bent upon her last voyage and finishing her career, came a large yacht, on the deck of which several human beings could be descried.

On she came, making straight for the rough ridge of rocks which at low water were just visible, but now were treacherously covered by the foaming water, not that, had she known her danger, she could have evaded it, for she was powerless as a chip of wood upon the raging sea.

Great as the danger was for them on board the excitement of those on shore was more evident if not so intense, and men gathered at the pier head and made signals to the doomed vessel that she should alter her course and make for the mouth of the harbour, but she was doomed, and they might as well have raved to the wind or waved frantic gestures to the moon.

As she came nearer those on the pier head, among whom was Lord Duncan, swept the deck with his glass, and it lighted upon the face of a girl, bound, as it seemed to him, at the mast, her abundant dark hair flying behind her and hanging on her shoulders, but the white face was that of the woman he loved.

The sight for a moment galvanised him, then he dropped the glass and turned to the men around him.

"There is a lady on board that ship," he cried; "I will give a thousand pounds to the man who brings her ashore alive."

"A thousand pounds?" was repeated, and rang among the crowd, but no man, even for this sum, dared face the tempestuous billows.

An old lifeboat, not too seaworthy, was in a shed hard by, and a young man, a sailor fired by the promised reward, after a second's pause, shouted out:

"Nine hands, lads, at a hundred pounds apiece, but none with wives or mothers or children to take care on. Quick, there's no time to lose."

The offer was quickly passed on; willing hands were numerous enough to drag out the boat, the crew was made up as though by magic, and in almost less time than it takes me to describe it the boat was making its way out of the harbour trying to intercept the doomed ship.

As well try to arrest the tide or chain the hurricane, and there is nothing for it but to await the end and snatch whom they can from the jaws of death.

Not long have they to wait, however; having lost one anchor, dragging the other, on the yacht comes, till it reaches the line of rocks, when a terrific crash like an engine of destruction dashes into the side of the once lovely craft, and she is thrown over on her side, her trailing anchor being likewise caught, and there she lies, every incoming wave sweeping over her.

Some of those on board, stout swimmers, struck out for shore, for so near were they to safety that a strong man might have thrown a stone upon the vessel's deck.

And more than one strong swimmer with a rope tied round the waist plunged into the boiling, seething surge to the help of the wrecked.

Of these was Lord Duncan.

Stripped to one garment, with a rope firmly fixed beneath his arms, he plunged into the water.

Five times did he essay to breast the waves, each time to be thrown back, the sixth, undaunted, he swims: he will bring back the woman he loves, alive or dead, or he will perish in the attempt.

The boat cannot approach the yacht, it is too



[THE PLOT MISARRIED.]

near the shore not to expose it to the danger of sharing the same fate; all the men have jumped or been swept from the deck of the vessel, only that girl, half conscious, remains, but saved from being washed away by the rope that is so loosely around her.

Her lover reaches the deck at last, and a shout of encouragement goes up from those on shore; but the worst part still remains.

She cannot help him to save herself, she is too far gone for that, besides, she has received a blow from some of the falling timber, and she can only cling to him as he desires her, while to make his precious burden still more secure, he binds her with the rope that has held her round the waist and his own, then, leaving the wave-washed deck, he plunges once more into the sea.

The rope that connects him with the land is stout and strong, as well it might be, for he is dashed upon the rocks and is drawn at length on shore with his precious burden, she quite unconscious, he bruised, bleeding, but after the first few seconds calm and collected.

"Take her to my house," said Mabel, looking at the lovely but death-like face of the deluged girl.

"No, take her to the hotel, come with us, and you too," said Lord Duncan, glancing at the two ladies and the surgeon; "you can be of use," he added.

Then, getting some clothes on, he followed the cavalcade, in the centre of which was carried Lizzie's still unconscious form.

An odd party was awaiting their arrival, some people who had arrived late the night before, and who had watched the wreck from the Beach Hotel windows.

Faces, that as he came nearer Lord Duncan recognised, though in the whirl of the moment they made no impression upon his mind, for he felt something like a victor who has wrested his dearest from that powerful enemy, the sea.

A victor! Yes, he has rescued her body, has he also saved her life?

Mabel and Robert Marker and one of the hotel servants work hard upon the more than half drowned girl to restore her to consciousness, and they succeed, but the surgeon's face is very grave, his patient's hours are numbered, not the raging waters, but the falling masts and spars have done their work, and before the sun sets, she will have taken her last look on the light of this world.

In a few words he tells Mabel this, then he leaves the room to communicate the sad news to the man who had risked his life to bring the girl ashore, and Loo creeps into the room.

"She is dying for me," is the one thought in Loo's mind, and she walks softly to the couch on which they have laid her, and taking the hand, not so white as her own, but oh, so beautifully moulded, in hers, she presses it to her lips gently.

The girl opens her eyes, and a faint smile plays upon her lips.

"You are Loo?" she asked, feebly.

"Yes, and you are suffering for me," was the agonised reply. "What can I do to atone for it?"

There could be no answer, for other faces had crowded into the room, there seemed to be no end to them, and Lord Duncan, stepping forward with a great awe in his face, knelt by the side of the couch and passing his arm under the girl's shoulders gently lifted her so that she could make a pillow of his shoulder.

A happy smile came over her white face, and in a low voice, for speaking was terribly painful, she said:

"The Lord has given me my heart's desire, Donald; I shall die in your arms. Kiss me."

He complied, scarcely able to repress his sobs.

After a few seconds the dying girl looked around, and her eyes rested upon a once familiar face.

"Aunt Elizabeth!" she murmured, and Lady Elizabeth, kneeling by her side and kissing her tenderly, begged her forgiveness.

They had forgotten another presence there,

but a dark Asiatic-looking woman now came to the side of the couch, and asked:

"Is this my child?"

And Lady Elizabeth, like anyone stung, started, turned pale and mutely made way for her.

But a change also came over Lizzie's face, and she clung to Donald's arm as though for protection.

It was no false pride, no unwillingness to admit her origin, but the stranger with her big eyes, dark skin and huge earrings was repulsive to her, seemed like one of the bogies with which her childhood had been threatened, and instead of welcoming she shrank from her.

The half-caste saw this, and herself chilled drew back, but a warm hand was placed on hers, an eager face with deep blue eyes looked up into her black ones, and a girl's voice breathlessly said:

"You are Suma!"

"You are Loo?" was the reply, and instantly the two were clasped in each other's arms, while Suma, laughing and crying, excited as her husband had never seen her before, cried:

"Jack, here is Loo, I've found her," then turning to a handsome but grizzled man, she said with dignity, "Hill Sahib, there is your child."

Loo looked at the stranger bewildered, and suffered him to take her hand, but the dying girl was speaking and all turned to listen to her.

Lady Elizabeth had resumed her place at her side and it was to her she said:

"Is that your niece? The one whose place I have so long filled?"

A low affirmative was given, and then Loo was beckoned to her side.

"I have taken your place through life, I am taking it in death," she said, slowly and with difficulty. "The debt is paid; kiss me all, and now leave me with Donald, so many faces tire me."

Silently they complied; they knew it was for the last time.

(To be Continued.)



[WITHOUT MERCY.]

THE LOVE PACT.

CHAPTER XVII.

Attempt the end, and never stand to doubt;
Nothing's so hard but search will find it out.

HERRICK.

THE small town a few leagues distant from the Château D'Aubriion where the marquis's confidential man of business resided possessed along its narrow, stony streets many quaint, antique edifices, but amongst these the residence of Jacques Cochart was certainly the most noteworthy and striking.

The house, which was at once his office and his dwelling, stood in one of the best streets of the little town.

It was a very narrow and winding thoroughfare, the old houses that bordered it extending their upper storeys over the roadway and causing it to appear still more straitened.

The residence of Cochart, which was his patrimony, was one of the most ancient houses in the little street.

Heavy walnut beams blackened by time stood out in bold contrast to the yellow plaster of its front. Small windows of obsolete pattern glazed with thick, uneven green glass blinked like the half-closed eyes of a snake at the passers-by and scarcely sufficed, even under the full glow of a summer's sunshine, to light up the dull, tomblike chambers within.

The ponderous oaken doors were crossed and recessed by heavy diagonal bands of iron and in each interstice so thickly planted with great round-headed iron nails as to be able to resist crowbar and axe and yield only to petard or fire.

Indeed in the old days when Catholic and Huguenot had their hands on each other's throat many a hunted fugitive had owed his life to the security of such a portal.

The lower windows too were guarded by thick reticulated bars of stout iron.

The aspect of the entire house was sad and sombre beyond that of neighbouring dwellings on this wintry afternoon.

But it was not less dull and gloomy in brighter seasons. The cage in which carolled a happy bird, the little pots of coarse red clay filled with fragrant Keseda would in spring and summer throw somewhat of light and colour and sweetness on most other houses, however poor the inmates, but no such little trait of attractiveness ever appeared at the Maison Cochart.

Yet it was whispered in the town that Jules Cochart could have enjoyed himself with the rest.

Well might door be barred and window grated, said sapient groups, with a grave head-shake. Was not the notary well nigh a millionaire? Had he not houses here, farmlands and orchards there?

Did not the D'Aubriion demesnes yield him toll? Was he not an operator on the Bourse—a usurer—a grinder of the faces of the poor? Bah! Had he not in his bed-chamber a mighty coffer stuffed to its brim with golden louis-d'ors, and was it not their nocturnal reflection as he bent a worshipping gaze upon the treasure in long vigils by the midnight taper that had tinged his parchment face as with chronic jaundice?

So ran rumour, and the people, although they detested and perhaps despised the notary, yet spoke boastingly to strangers of "our millionaire, M. Cochart. Ah, yes, he is even richer than Rothschild."

The notary's household was a small one, consisting of the master himself, an old housekeeper, very deaf and half blind, and a wretched, half-starved girl, whom the housekeeper railled at from morn till night, and Cochart—unless he was belied—sometimes chastised fearfully with the heavy strap he used to correct his wolf-dog, Dent de Fer, when his nightly howling waxed unendurably lugubrious.

The master of the house sat in his cabinet next to his bedchamber on the second story.

The day was bitter cold, thick snow covering the slanting high-peaked roofs before him and icicles forming a hundred fantastic figures on the little green panes. The howling wind, which seemed to wail for the dying year, found entrance through the many crevices of the aged habitation.

Yet, despite the severity of the season, the only artificial heat in the room emanated from a little chauffrette on which Cochart rested his splay feet encased in coarse straw-plaited slippers.

He sat at a table drawn to the window, his cheek resting on one bony, knuckly hand, gazing out abstractedly at the eddying snowflakes.

Presently he drew towards him a small chased steel casket. First employing a curiously-formed key and then pressing various well nigh invisible projections, the notary opened lid after lid each within the other like a Chinese puzzle.

Caution was needed in dealing with that tiny receptacle of his search, for had it been handled by unwary fingers little stiletto blades, poison-tipped, would have sprung forth to take vengeance on the depredator.

From the central division Cochart drew a small packet, untied it and opened the contents before him.

They were the letters which the Marquis D'Aubriion had broken open and read at the post-office of the Norman village.

Very slowly and carefully the notary perused each letter in order, then folded and replaced it in the packet.

"I cannot reach the bottom of this mystery," he muttered. "It may not concern me and my cherished plans at all; but," and he hesitated, meditating, "but—it—may. All my successes have been won by attention to the minutest clues. I have neglected no detail when I have set myself to win whatever may have been the prize I coveted; and I have won—I have always won!" and he rubbed his bony hands briskly together and emitted a little chuckle. "Ay,

and I'll go on winning! Are not the D'Aubrión lands nearly in my grasp?"

He rose to his feet and slowly paced the wide, gloomy chamber.

"I will let nothing slip, I must know who this Eugénie is. It will be necessary to cross the Channel and search out what may have been known of her in England when she died. It too may be necessary to ascertain what the old woman who fled to Paris can tell. Bien! I will try England first, and will go to the foggy capital on New Year's Day. It will be beginning the year well, for I know my interests are involved, though I am not able to discover the clue."

He resumed his seat, put the letter into the basket and refastened its complicated machinery.

"I am not satisfied about that miserable Parisian," he resumed, in a low, monotoned soliloquy. "I care not that he should suspect me. His addressee can form no plan to traverse any scheme of mine. But he may give trouble. He knows I have the letters. Bah! I could penetrate his disguise with ease. Tiens! but so did he mine! Bien! he is not quite such a fool as he looks and must be watched carefully. Well, if he crosses my path many times his fate is sealed—a little closer grip of this old hand on the night my fingers tightened round his delicate throat and I had sealed it then."

He raised a common-looking jug, containing some weak eau sucrée and moistened his parched-out lips with the liquor.

"When I return from England I will bring these matters to a conclusion speedily. I will grasp those broad old acres, I will humble that haughty old man—ay, to the very dust—and I will espouse the proud girl who has scorned me as a man of the people. I shall love her the more that I feel she is an unwilling bride—I shall press the warmer kisses on her full red lips because I know she loathes the caresses and writhes in my hated embrace. Ho! ho! how glorious it will be! How her heart will be wrung when she sees the grey-haired father, the mild-eyed mother, at my feet dependent upon the scorned servant for the bread they eat. Ah, ha! she will rebel! I doubt it not. And if she do she shall be brought into submission, as I conquer my dog. Under the rich robes she will wear my wife shall carry the marks of such chastisement as I give my servant if she be disobedient!"

And he glanced mockingly at a thick leathern strap which hung on the wall.

He put away the cabinet in an old armoire and walked across to the door.

Ere he reached it a form started up on the outside, a little, deformed, weazen-faced girl whose ear had been pressed to the keyhole and whose bare feet now bore her swiftly down the stairs ere her dreaded master could emerge from his retreat.

CHAPTER XVIII.

He climbs the crackling stairs—he bursts the door,
Nor feels his feet glow scorching with the floor;
His breath choked gasping with the volume smoke,
But still from room to room his way he broke.

ВЪХОД.

LADY ADELINE VAVASSOUR's words were taken up and echoed by those who immediately surrounded her, and in a few moments all those not actively engaged in the securing of prisoners or the pursuit of fugitives had gathered into an excited and expectant group.

"Kesterton in that fiery ruin?" cried Captain Mostyn. "Heaven grant that you are mistaken, Lady Adeline. It cannot be!"

"It is true!" cried the excited girl. "He dared not come down for fear of the rioters, and I had forgotten him in my own terror and confusion. Oh, can he not be saved, Captain Mostyn?" she went on, clasping her hands with a convulsive movement. "Had it not been for my counsel he might not now have been in such dire peril."

"The staircase which we descended has not yet fallen," interposed Robert Wilmer. "I will strive to reach him."

Without waiting for a reply the young man sprang off, followed by three or four others.

"Stay! stay!" cried Lady Adeline. "You do not know where he is! The secret chamber! The panel! Oh, it is too late!" she wailed, in an agonised voice. "It is too late! and I am the cause!"

Amid the roar and crackling of the conflagration and the hubbub of many voices her voice had failed to reach Wilmer's ear.

In reply to the eager questioning of Hugh Mostyn Lady Adeline hurriedly detailed the manner and place of Rupert Kesterton's concealment.

As she ended a sudden sound, a fresh glow of crimson on the snow showed that the destroyer was rapidly bringing its work to a close.

"I will find the panel, Lady Adeline. My cousin shall not be lost if I can aid him."

Hastily giving the ladies into the charge of the leader of the Yeomanry, Hugh Mostyn rushed towards the open doorway, from which belched forth volumes of thick, red-tinged smoke.

Ere he reached it a tremendous shout from the moat front of the Dower House fell on his ear.

After a moment's indecision the captain ran round to the spot, followed by all who were in the rear courtyard, not excepting Lady Vavassour and her daughter.

Standing there at the extreme margin of the frozen water was a knot of men composed of the Yeomanry, Robert Wilmer's adherents, and their captives, while a few of the rioters had stopped in their headlong flight and were turning back.

All eyes were bent on one spot as by an overpowering fascination.

The lower part of the mansion was wrapt in flames, which, mingled with smothering smoke, issued freely from the windows. The fire had even reached the roof, as was evidenced by numerous fiery tongues of flame which penetrated the heat-cracked tiles and hissed sharply as they met the contact of the half-melted snow.

A large portion of the tiling had been detached by some violent effort from within and had fallen behind the parapet, revealing the naked rafters like the bars of a gigantic cage—and behind them a human face pale with fear and horror, blackened by smoke, and bleeding from wounds—the visage of Rupert Kesterton!

During the time the rioters held possession of the Dower House Rupert Kesterton had lain perdu, with as much equanimity as was possible in such a position.

He considered it well nigh certain that his enemies would give up their search in a very short time, and would then, perhaps after a little pillage, quit the mansion. He did not suppose they would offer actual violence to the lady of the house or to Adeline, rightly deeming himself to be the object of their visit.

Once he had crept down along the dark, tortuous passage on hearing the shrieks of Lady Adeline when the drunken pitmen seized her so rudely.

But as he reached the panel Meers's threat recurred to his mind, and with a cowering mien and a craven heart he made his way back to that little darksome refuge beneath the steeply pitched roof which was termed the "Fugitives' Nest."

Although the den had no window, and he could not perceive the approach of the small armed force which arrived so opportunely, yet Kesterton could hear the sounds of conflict and the reports of firearms and knew that succour had reached the Dower House.

Again he crept down and strove this time to open the panel: there were no detectable means of doing so, but in the darkness he pressed each side and corner in the hope of touching a concealed spring.

In vain!
Every inch of the panel presented the same smooth surface!

While still thus engaged and endeavouring also to make himself heard by means of shouts Kesterton discovered, from the noise of hurrying, trampling feet, that both rioters and rescuers were tumultuously leaving the house.

To his anxiety for liberation there was now

added terror. He found his respiration gradually becoming more laboured. His breast heaved, a strange sensation of suffocation grew momentarily stronger.

"Could the air be so stagnant in the long-unused refuge that it would not support life?" he asked himself.

But the cause was indicated as he spoke by a loud cry, which penetrated even into that close space and apprized the captive that the Dower House was on fire!

Kesterton redoubled his efforts. Again and again his shaking hands explored the surface of the smooth oak, but again vainly. He struck it madly with his clenched hand until the knuckles were covered with blood. He kicked frantically at the immovable barrier. He yelled forth entreaties, imprecations, prayers!

In vain!

The panel defied his efforts. No footsteps of rescuer sounded on the stairs—naught but the now audible crackling of the flames smote his ear—naught but the blackness of night met his eye!

As the fire mounted the heat and smoke drove the miserable wretch to the "Nest." They followed him there. The lambent fire-tongues crept through the floor and threw a threatening light on the dark beams and the cowering, despairing man!

But they served to reveal some old weapons of long-dead and gone warriors, which, not being sufficiently ornamental to garnish the walls, had been relegated to the Nest as to a lumber chamber.

A heavy iron mace amongst these arms caught Kesterton's eye. He seized it with a glow of hope. Might it not be possible now to dash in the panel?

A glance sufficed to show that the passage thereto was now an impassable fiery road!

One other way remained, and with frantic energy Rupert Kesterton brought the heavy mass of iron to bear on the tiles, which shone through the unceiled beams in the firelight.

They fell crashing down, and a large space was soon cleared, but still the closely placed rafters would not permit egress.

It was as the prisoner smote fiercely at the smaller of these rafters that the men gathered outside first perceived him.

At last the old rafter yielded to the massive weapon and Kesterton struggled through the opening, finding himself upon the roof behind the parapet.

A fresh chorus of cries rose from the groups who stood by the edge of the moat—shouts of excitement, advice and encouragement.

Kesterton had need of the latter, for his position was scarcely less perilous than before and might have stricken horror to the bravest heart.

A fresh burst of heavy smoke clouds from the windows of the rooms below hid him for a space from the spectators.

Hugh Mostyn had again hastily returned to the door of the burning house to find Robert Wilmer, but had been baffled and beaten back in his efforts to penetrate the interior by the glaring volcano within.

The captain had considered the fate of his cousin as sealed, and, though he had no affection or respect for a man so unlovable, so utterly unlike the ideal of their own chivalrous race, yet this man was his kinsman, and at thought of his terrible end Hugh Mostyn's heart was heavy.

Nor when he had witnessed the emergence of Kesterton from his prison could the captain view him otherwise than doomed.

But still another way of escape seemed within the limits of possibility, and it was to carry this out that he sought the assistance of Robert Wilmer as well as to dissuade him from further useless risk in attempting to reach Kesterton from the inside of the house.

At this juncture a hearty hurrah broke on his ear as half a dozen men, headed by Robert Wilmer, came through the open chaise gates sustaining a long ladder, while some others brought two shorter ones and some coils of rope.

"Be of good heart, captain," cried the engineer, cheerily, as Hugh Mostyn came towards

him. "We'll have Mr. Kesterton out yet. Now then, lads. Buckle to with a will."

The dextrous fingers of the Yorkshireman and many willing hands which assisted speedily lashed the three ladders together, strengthening them at their points of juncture by some stout poles from the riskyard.

Then commenced the difficult task of raising the swaying, fragile fabric.

At last it was done. The foot of the combined ladders rested on the margin of the moat. The quivering top was let down with extreme gentleness till it rested on the smoke-wreathed parapet.

An exultant shout burst from those around—a cry of joy escaped the lips of mother and daughter.

But neither sight nor sound came from the roof of the Dower House, save that the dull clouds were now mixed with flame and a shower of little gleaming globules which fell from under the parapet with little hisses on the melted snow indicated that the lead of the gutters was liquefying.

Who would mount that shaking, unstable fabric to the rescue?

Men looked at each other doubtfully and shook their heads.

But without an instant's delay the foot of Hugh Mostyn was on the lowest step.

His arm was seized in a firm grasp.

"Stay, Captain Mostyn! It is but a short time since you left a bed of sickness. Leave this to me. I will do all that man may do. Should I not return I leave my mother and adopted sister to your charge!"

Ere Hugh Mostyn could reply the engineer had pushed him aside with kindly force and had gained the first half-dozen steps.

Upward, while the frail structure swayed perilously to and fro, Wilmer went with a firm and rapid tread.

He reached the heavy smoke which still hid the upper part of the house, and ere plunging into it he turned his head.

Whom did Robert Wilmer's gaze seek so earnestly?

It was easy to discover. The young man's gaze singled out from the upturned faces a countenance of beauty to which pity, sympathy and admiration gave an added charm—the face of a lovely woman set in a glory of golden hair which had broken from its fastening—a visage fair as the angel of a painter's dreams.

As the eyes of Adeline Vavassour and Robert Wilmer met a strange pang, half pain, half exquisite pleasure, ran through each heart.

Then the young man turned his head again and ascended the last few rungs of the ladder.

But why had not Kesterton seized the means of escape presented to him when the shouts of the men below announced that the ladder had been raised?

Another peril had come.

At the moment when he became insensible to the excited spectators Kesterton had glanced round with a look of despairing agony to see what course remained to him.

As he did so he sprang back panic-stricken.

Some few yards away, partially hidden behind a mass of antique and ornamental brickwork which sustained the gilded vane, surmounted by the crest of the Vavassours, a man was kneeling!

From an angle of this brickwork the muzzle of a gun protruded, and the fierce eyes glancing along the gleaming barrel—the ready fingers prepared that instant to touch the trigger—were those of James Meers!

Kesterton saw that his enemy had indeed found him.

Hate—stronger than death itself—had been a sure instinct.

What little remnant of courage he had retained fled at the sight, and in abject terror Kesterton fell on his knees.

He would have entreated the poacher's mercy, he would have called on Heaven for aid, but the tongue that he urged to such petitions clung uselessly to his parched mouth, and he could only kneel there to await swift-coming death!

But the poacher was not in a hurry to pull the trigger. Not that his heart held any merciful relentings towards the man upon whom he had vowed vengeance. No. But even in his own dangerous situation—with the abyss of fire below, only divided from him by the yielding roof—he would enjoy this supreme moment of revenge—he would torture this poor wretch as the wild beast lengthens the torments of its victim.

But Meers's vengeance balked itself.

The roof was rapidly giving way and the yielding rafters could scarce uphold their burden.

Suddenly with a loud crash the vane pinnacle fell!

The heavy mass of brickwork overwhelmed the poacher. Ere he could gain his feet, with a despairing instinct, he pulled the trigger of one barrel. The next instant the gun was struck from his hand, himself prostrated, and the heavy stone which had crowned the pinnacle, falling upon him, crushed both thighs and pinned him down immovably on the heated surface of the roof!

Despite the agony which he suffered Meers turned an eager, hungry glance in the direction of his foe. He cared not for himself so that he had slain his enemy.

With a deep groan of disappointment and rage he discerned that Kesterton was unharmed, the charge having passed over his head innocuously.

Kesterton at the same moment recognised the disabled condition of his foe and his visage assumed an appearance absolutely demoniac.

"It is my turn now," he muttered, vengefully.

He stooped and picked up the heavy mace, which he had thrown down, and approached the helpless man.

Meers saw him coming and read his purpose in the eager glitter of his small, cruel eyes.

"Oh, for a moment's freedom!" groaned the poacher. "To die thus like a trapped rat and by the hand of one who has done me such foul wrong! Oh, for one moment of strength and freedom!"

And he writhed in a vain and painful struggle to be free or to raise himself to his knee.

With a shriek of agony he fell back—he was impotent as a crushed worm!

Rupert Kesterton stood over him with the heavy weapon lifted on high!

"It is my turn now, Meers," he said, in tones of irony. "Will you beg for what remains of life in your miserable carcass?"

"Never!" he vociferated. "Let me die how and when I may I will die a man—and an Englishman! I will not play the part you did a few short minutes since—miserable cur! Could I be free I would have your life yet!"

"Die then!" cried Kesterton, in an access of passion at the taunt. "Die!"

The heavy weapon descended with a dull sound on the poacher's unprotected forehead, crashing in the skull in a ghastly wound. The battered head fell back, and with a hard-drawn breath James Meers was no more!

"Mr. Kesterton!"

A shout rang out on the thick air.

The murderer turned his head quickly.

It came from Robert Wilmer, who had reached the roof and seen the fiendish act, but too late to arrest Kesterton's hand.

The men faced each other with stern looks.

"A murderer!" said Wilmer, with slow, deep utterance. "I have risked my life to save that of a son of Cain!"

Kesterton heeded not the terrible reproach. His mind turned to the possibility of escape.

"Wilmer! how came you here? How can I leave this place?"

"I came to save you," responded the engineer.

"Had I dreamed of such a deed as this no act of mine should have helped you. But this avails not now. Red-handed murderer as I know you to be, I will yet not denounce you. I will conceal as best I may your evil deed for your kinsman's sake. Come!"

"Whither?"

"To the ladder. This way!"

A sharp detonation rang out!

Robert Wilmer placed his hand to his side with a sudden movement, and fell heavily.

The unexploded barrel of the poacher's gun, which was wedged in the fallen brickwork as it had dropped from Meers's hand, had exploded under the increasing heat, and the charge had stricken Wilmer in the side.

Without a second look at his preserver Kesterton sprang along the roof, found the end of the ladder and descended its trembling length with hands that clung convulsively to the smooth sides.

As he reached the ground Captain Mostyn rushed forward.

"Kesterton, where is Wilmer?"

"I don't know. Dead, I think. Pity—can't be helped!"

A sharp, shrill, bitter cry rang out on the frosty air—the agonised shriek of a woman!

Hugh Mostyn turned his head.

Lady Adeline had fainted on her mother's breast.

"Kesterton!" he shouted, madly, "what do you mean? That man perilled his life for you! Where is he?"

"Up there!" said Kesterton, in a cynical tone, pointing to the battlemented parapet. "He fainted or something. It can't be helped now. He couldn't get down if he were sensible. See!"

The flames from the window were already lapping the ladder greedily.

Hugh Mostyn turned upon his kinsman a look of withering scorn, which burnt into his soul indelibly and intensified the hate already resting there.

"Men," cried the captain to those around, "I will save Wilmer or die with him!"

Before anyone could detain him he sprang up the ladder.

A deep hum of admiration sounded from the hardy miners and hearty farmers who stood around.

They were men formed to appreciate an act of heroism—for they were Englishmen! Many willing hands steadied the foot of the fragile means of the perilous ascent, many hearts all unused to prayer sent up fervent though silent appeals to Heaven for Hugh Mostyn's preservation.

He reached the summit and disappeared.

The flames leapt out even more hungrily.

The upper part of the ladder caught the red glow and began to smoulder sullenly and slowly.

Scores of earnest voices shouted appeals to Hugh Mostyn to return, and one pale-faced woman, now restored to consciousness, fixed her eyes on the smothering smoke as though entranced.

A shout of exultant gladness!

The captain appeared, bearing the stout form of Wilmer in his arms.

Carefully and with cautious steps he got over the parapet, and, placing his feet on the ladder, began the hazardous descent.

Naught but Hugh Mostyn's physical strength sustained by intense excitement could have enabled him to perform such a feat.

Holding Wilmer with the left arm while the strong right hand clung tenaciously to the ladder side, the captain came down!

Half the distance was achieved when a rush of fierce flame issued from the upper windows.

It enveloped the bearer and his burden!

It scorched with its fiery tongue that strong right hand!

Blinded and well nigh maddened by the heat the captain relaxed his hold!

At the same moment the ladder rung on which he stood parted, and both men were precipitated into the air!

(To be Continued.)

CAST ENGRAVINGS.—A cheap way of reproducing engravings is to use cast plates, which may be worked off on a common printing press. An alloy of tin 1 part, lead 64 parts, and antimony 12 parts, is poured, while in a state of fusion, over the engraved plate, which is raised on suitable supports.

THE LORD OF STRATHMERE; OR, THE HIDDEN CRIME.

CHAPTER I.

EDMUND, BARON STRATHMERE, was one of the richest noblemen in England. He had money in the funds, bank-stocks, and foreign railway shares, a shooting-box in Scotland, a villa in the South of France, and two or three estates in his own country, the chief of which, Strathmere Park, was fit to be the habitation of royalty.

But with all his wealth and grandeur, he was disagreeable, crabbed and miserly. He was sixty-five years old, a widower and childless.

The fact that he had no son of his own to succeed him, further embittered a disposition that had never been amiable or pleasant.

The heir-apparent of Lord Strathmere's title and wealth was the son of his younger brother, a noble young fellow named Ralph Chandos.

Lord Strathmere had another nephew, the son of a sister, nearly twenty years older than Chandos, and as unlike the latter as night differs from day.

This man, Norman Brabazon, who was a favourite with his uncle, had been pushed forward into a prominent position by his lordship's influence, had been a Member of Parliament, had made himself conspicuous in politics, and was now, with the baron's assistance, making a vigorous effort to secure a very valuable and highly important foreign appointment commensurate with his ambition.

Ralph Chandos, at the time of which we write, more than thirty years ago, was twenty-three years of age, gay, frank, impetuous, somewhat hot of temper, but warm-hearted, brave and generous to a fault, a chivalrous, honest, true-hearted man, scorning a falsehood, fearless and honourable to the heart's core.

In person he was strikingly handsome, with fair and noble features, blonde hair, a broad and massive forehead, steel-blue eyes capable of expressing a vast range of emotion, and a mouth at once firm and sweet.

His figure was worthy his face, being tall, lithe, and splendidly shaped; altogether, he resembled a young knight of the olden times of chivalry.

Norman Brabazon was dark almost to swarthy, soft and sinuous in his movements, with eyes of midnight gloom, and with thin lips that writhed in hypocritical smiles, or set themselves together tensely over his prominent teeth. He was not so tall as his cousin, but was thin and wiry and muscular.

His visage, dark and inscrutable, betrayed nothing of the wicked soul that lurked behind it, or the scheming brain that directed his actions.

A born schemer, his uncle believed him intended by nature for a diplomatist: he was shrewd, keen-witted, polished in manners, and possessed certain arts of fascination that procured for him the liking of many people who could not look below the surface, or penetrate to the reality beneath the specious outer seeming.

This man Brabazon was the son of an elder sister of Lord Strathmere, and therefore out of the immediate line of succession.

By the terms of the letters-patent by which the title of Baron Strathmere had been secured to the chief of the Chandos family centuries before, the title descended in the male line; but in default of a male heir it passed to the "dis-taff" line, that is, to the nearest female heir.

Thus, if Ralph Chandos should ever chance to die unmarried, his cousin, Norman Brabazon, would become heir-apparent to the title and to the entailed estates.

This possibility had often been considered by Brabazon.

With all his greedy soul, he coveted the brilliant prospects of his young cousin.

No worldly honours he had achieved could compare in his sight with the title of Baron Strathmere and the possession of the wealth accompanying it.

He hated Ralph Chandos with a bitter, un-reasoning, jealous hatred.

He poisoned the mind of his uncle against the young man.

He was always hoping that something would happen to cut short his cousin's young life, and thus bring him a step nearer the Strathmere succession.

He entered into Chandos's love of boyish sports, in the hope that in some adventure he would meet his death.

Chandos loved hunting.

Brabazon begged his uncle to buy the lad a hunter, and he himself selected the animal—a vicious beast that had killed two men; but Chandos proved the horse's master and tamed him completely.

The heir of Strathmere developed a passion for yachting.

In consequence of Brabazon's constant urging, the baron procured for his young nephew a handsome yacht, but through numberless cruises to Norway and the Mediterranean, through squalls and storms, the yacht bore herself most gallantly, and her master became so expert a seaman that all hopes of his being drowned vanished into disappointment and chagrin.

Brabazon's hatred of his cousin grew with every day and hour until it became the over-mastering passion of his life. It received a final impulse when both men fell in love with the same young lady.

Brabazon had married early in life the dowerless younger daughter of a noble and powerful family.

His wife had survived their marriage but a few years, but her family had assisted him in various ways throughout his career.

His first marriage had been for high connec-tions.

Now he desired to marry for love as well as greed.

The young lady, Miss Pelham, preferred his rival and betrothed herself to Chandos. And when Brabazon learned the fact the heaped-up bitterness of years overflowed, and he cursed his cousin and swore that Chandos should die and that Miss Pelham should become his—Brabazon's—wife.

But how was this double end to be accom-plished?

He brooded upon the subject night and day, and gradually there grew and developed in his soul, like a hideous serpent, a deadly and appal-ling scheme worthy the conception of Satan himself.

He would destroy his rival and seize upon the Strathmere title and estates at one fell swoop.

The blow that should sweep Ralph Chandos from his path should sweep the baron aside also.

He would gratify cupidity and revenge at the same moment.

The plot was matured slowly.

When every detail had been settled in his mind he ran down from London to Strathmere Park to visit his uncle, with whom his fawning ways had made him a favourite.

As he rode from the station over the beautiful country and entered the well-kept park, with its stately avenues, shaded by magnificent beeches, his heart throbbed high, and he gazed from the window of the carriage gloatingly, and muttered to himself that all this would soon be his.

The mansion of Strathmere Park was a veritable palace, vast in extent, a great grey-stone pile of the Elizabethan order of architecture, celebrated throughout England for its splendour and magnificence.

As Brabazon's eyes rested upon it, it seemed to him so fair a jewel that a man might well sell his soul to gain it.

"I am forty-three years old," he said, to him-self. "I come of long-lived families. If I enter into possession very soon, I may count upon forty years at least of ease and luxury and

grandeur. The game is worth the candle. I will play it boldly and remorselessly."

He alighted in the porte-cochère, and ascended to the grand entrance hall.

Lord Strathmere met him just within the door and gave him warm welcome.

The baron was thin and bent, with a small wizened face and shrewd, peering eyes.

His lips usually wore a cynical smile.

He had little faith in his fellow-men, but he liked Brabazon, who played upon his follies and weaknesses, who brought him stories of the wickednesses and weaknesses of other people, and who flattered him so delicately that he be-lieved his praises sincere.

The baron extended both of his hands. Brabazon shook them warmly, and the pair walked on to the library. The season was winter and a bright sea-coal fire glowed in the polished grate. The two men halted on the hearth-rug.

"Well, Norman," said the baron, "how about your appointment? Have you secured it?"

Brabazon shrugged his shoulders.

"Not yet," he answered, "but I'm tolerably certain of doing so. With your influence and that of the De Courcys, I ought to be able to secure even this appointment as Governor of Australia. I have been assured by a noted party-leader that I shall be successful. I shouldn't be surprised if I received an official notice of my success to-morrow."

"I shall be surprised if you fail. The post is important, but you are well backed by two of the most powerful families in the kingdom. Your political career is vastly in your favour. But I shall be sorry to lose you," added the baron, a shadow on his withered, cynical old face.

"You will have Chandos," answered Bra-bazon, with a slight curl of the thin lips. "Is he now at the Park?"

"He has gone over to Pelham Wold, but will be back again to dinner. Ah! that is his step now."

A ringing tread was heard upon the marble pavement of the hall.

The door opened, and the fair, frank face of Ralph Chandos looked in.

Seeing his uncle, he advanced into the library, bowing politely to Lord Strathmere, and more coolly to Brabazon.

"Mr. Pelham rode over with me, uncle," he said, addressing the baron. "He would be glad to see you on business. May I bring him in?"

"Certainly," replied Lord Strathmere. "Don't go, Norman. I have no business with Mr. Pelham that need be kept secret from you."

Chandos went out, returning with Mr. Pelham, the father of the young lady to whom he was betrothed.

Mr. Pelham was short and stout, a round and rosy person, with a florid complexion, a pair of trim side whiskers, and a jovial expression of countenance.

He was distinguished among his friends for his bonhomie.

Of excellent family, he was a noted London banker, was immensely wealthy, the proprietor of a magnificent estate called Pelham Wold, a widower, and the father of one child, who was his heiress and the object of the loves of Chan-dos and Brabazon.

Mr. Pelham had the intense love of rank that has been so generally remarked among the British middle classes.

He desired his daughter to marry a man of title and also of wealth, and looked upon her betrothal to Ralph Chandos with favour.

He felt that when he could allude to her as "my daughter, Lady Strathmere," he should have attained the summit of his ambition.

He greeted the baron and Brabazon cour-teously, and took possession of the chair as-signed him.

He had a lively admiration for the ex-member of parliament, and questioned him in regard to his appointment.

Presently Ralph Chandos broached the object of his visit.

"Uncle," he said, his face flushing slightly,

"as you are aware, Miss Pelham has consented to marry me. I have urged that our marriage should take place immediately, or as soon as may be. I have appealed to Mr. Pelham, and he expresses his willingness to agree to my proposal."

"Under conditions," interrupted the banker, smiling pleasantly. "Conditions which, of course, my dear baron, you will readily accede to."

The baron smiled grimly.

"Let me hear what they are," he exclaimed.

"Chandos is your heir-apparent," said Mr. Pelham, "but he tells me that his sole income is an allowance which you make to him of two hundred pounds a year. Now that may keep him in gloves, but how far will it go toward the maintenance of an establishment? My daughter will have all I possess when I die, but I cannot strip myself while I live, not even for her dear sake. I must retain the mastership of the Wold, but I will settle upon her fifty thousand pounds before her marriage. Her husband would not consent to be dependent upon her. He must, therefore, have an assured adequate income."

"Is that all?" inquired the baron, ironically.

"No," said Mr. Pelham, gravely. "I am well aware that he is your heir-apparent, and that he expects to inherit your title and estates. But you are only sixty-five years old. You may marry again and have a son. To provide against such a contingency, I should like you to settle upon him one of your estates, that he may live as becomes a gentleman brought up as he has been."

Lord Strathmere's lips curled in a sneer.

"Your request seems very reasonable," he remarked. "Would five thousand a year content you as his allowance?"

Young Chandos's face glowed. He flashed a look of gratitude at the baron. Brabazon leaned against the mantelpiece, dark and inscrutable of visage as ever.

"I should say that five thousand a year would be a very proper allowance," said Mr. Pelham. "You have an income—pardon me—of ten times that amount, and need not miss it, while, added to my daughter's dowry, it will render our young pair handsomely independent. But the estate—"

"Perhaps Westmoor, in Yorkshire, might suit?" suggested the baron, sarcastically.

"Excellently well," answered Mr. Pelham. "Westmoor has a fine Tudor mansion, if I remember rightly, and is in a hunting country. Will you secure this income and estate to Mr. Chandos, so that in the possible event of your marriage he will not suffer?"

The baron glowered with rising anger. His miserly habits, his love of his possessions, caused him to regard Mr. Pelham's proposal as next thing to a highway robbery.

"I shall never marry again," he declared. "I have had two wives, and both were childless. I like my quiet, and I won't have a woman about to fill the house with company, or to disturb me with her frivolousness. I cannot prevent my nephew's inheritance at my death, but I will not divide with him while I live. I will never give him one penny of additional income during my lifetime. If he can't marry on two hundred a year let him go unmarried!"

Mr. Pelham looked shocked. Young Chandos grew pale. Brabazon's eyes showed a red flicker in their hard, black depths.

"I have, perhaps, made my proposals too suddenly," said Mr. Pelham, after a short pause. "Take time to consider the matter, baron."

"Not an hour—not a minute! I swear that I will never give Ralph Chandos another penny of income!" cried Lord Strathmere, violently. "He will have all I own when I die; is not that enough?"

Mr. Pelham's rosy face became very grave.

"Uncle," cried Chandos, "let me beseech you to comply with Mr. Pelham's wishes. I cannot marry Miss Pelham to become dependant upon her."

"Then you need not marry," cried the baron, coarsely.

"Can't you wait until uncle is through with

his money before wresting it from him, Ralph?" cried Brabazon, in his smooth voice.

Chandos darted a look of anger at his cousin. "I would rather have what I have asked for now when I need it," he exclaimed, hotly, "than all my uncle has to leave, if I must wait for years to get it. My life will be ruined. My uncle has never suffered me to learn a profession. He cannot keep me a boy for ever. I protest against this injustice. I will not submit to it."

"How will you help yourself?" cried the baron, mockingly.

"I will find a way," said Chandos, with a wild thought of appeal to the courts—an idea, the folly of which struck him as he spoke.

The baron interpreted the words as a threat.

"You hear?" he exclaimed, excitedly, turning to Mr. Pelham and to his nephew, in turn. "He dares to threaten me! If I am found murdered, you may arrest Ralph Chandos as my murderer! I wish you joy of your would-be son-in-law, Mr. Pelham."

The banker arose. The scene was distressing to him. The baron's unreasoning fury disgusted him.

"I will take my leave," he remarked, gravely.

"I need hardly say, baron, that you have received my proposal in a manner surprising to me. I hope to hear from you in a day or two that you have reconsidered the matter and resolved to act justly to your nephew and heir."

"I shall not reconsider my decision," fumed the baron, pacing to and fro with short, quick steps, his thin face aglow. "Your demand is nothing better than highway robbery. If my nephew wants a larger income during my lifetime, let him earn it. One thing is certain. He shall leave Strathmere Park to-morrow morning, not to return to it while I live. I wash my hands of him."

A haughty flush mantled the face of Ralph Chandos.

"Very well," he exclaimed. "I will go; I can earn money, Mr. Pelham. Only give me time. Gerda will wait for me."

Mr. Pelham made a gesture of dissent.

"You will find earning money up-hill employment, Ralph," he said. "And I will not permit Gerda to waste her life in a waiting that must be fruitless. If your uncle casts you off the engagement between you and my daughter must be dissolved. You would do well to try to soften the baron's resolve. He will not be inexorable when the happiness of two young people is in the scale."

"You don't understand me," cried the baron. "I will never yield to a demand so monstrous. Ralph Chandos leaves my house in the morning. As to his marriage, if you want him for a son-in-law, Mr. Pelham, accept him and support him."

Mr. Pelham refused to prolong a conversation that had become so painful to him. He retired, bowing with grave courtesy to Lord Strathmere, to Brabazon, and to Chandos, who, however, accompanied him from the room.

The baron paced to and fro, furious with indignation.

Brabazon still stood by the mantel-piece, a slow and evil smile gathering upon his thin lips.

Fate had played directly into his hands.

It seemed to him that some guardian demon had entered actively into his nefarious scheme and was assisting him to a perfect success.

Rank, wealth, worldly grandeur, revenge, even love, were almost within his grasp.

Only a great crime—a double crime—stood between him and them, and his soul was nerved to its commission!

"By to-morrow night," he said to himself, "I shall be master here, and Baron of Strathmere. And I shall be in a fair way to succeed Ralph Chandos as the lover of Gerda Pelham! Ah, if any of them knew what this night is to bring forth!"

CHAPTER II.

THE night fell in a strange, pale gloom upon Strathmere Park

The snow fell silently and steadily in a white sheet, drifting into corners and against palings, and covering the earth with a ghostly shroud.

Directly after dinner Ralph Chandos mounted his horse and rode over to Pelham Wold to see his betrothed and to exchange with her vows of eternal fidelity.

The interview between the lovers had been cut short by Mr. Pelham, who, well as he liked the young man, considered him, with his present prospects, not altogether an eligible suitor for the beautiful young heiress.

The banker proposed an absolute dissolution of the engagement existing between the young pair, on the ground that Lord Strathmere might live twenty years yet, and that he, Mr. Pelham, would not give his daughter to any man who must live upon her money.

Miss Pelham retired to her room, promising to wait for her lover a lifetime, if need be, and he, setting his lips together in a stern self-repression, departed, galloping his horse back to the park.

Those who saw him enter the great hall of his ancestral home, on his return, his coat white with snow, his young face pallid, despairing, desperate, his steel-blue eyes burning like coals, shook their heads gravely, and wondered what had happened to their beloved young master.

He dashed up the stairs like a whirlwind, passing Norman Brabazon on one of the broad landings without speaking, and rushed into his own chamber, slamming the door behind him.

Brabazon smiled evilly, and continued his descent.

A few paces below he came upon Morse, one of the footmen, who was staring in the direction in which young Chandos had vanished, surprise depicted upon his every feature. Brabazon shrugged his shoulders.

"There's some trouble afloat," he remarked, smoothly. "Mr. Ralph is in a perfect gale of temper. He seems as if he was bent on some desperate deed."

"He do, indeed, sir," replied Morse. "I never saw the young master like that before. He is in great trouble sure."

Brabazon passed on, and Morse gossiped with his fellows, all of whom were by this time quite well aware that "Mr. Ralph" was to leave Strathmere in the morning, that he had fallen into some disgrace with his uncle, and that his marriage with Miss Pelham had been broken off.

A word or two from Brabazon at an earlier hour of the evening had caused a dissemination of a knowledge of the true state of affairs between Lord Strathmere and his heir.

As Ralph Chandos, who was brave as a lion and generous as the sun, was a great favourite in the household, a general sympathy prevailed in his behalf.

Brabazon spent the evening with the baron in the library.

At ten o'clock he gave his arm to his lordship and helped him upstairs to his own apartment, exhibiting a tender solicitude that imposed upon the servants and upon its object.

He helped his uncle into his bed-room, a great lofty room furnished with the utmost luxury, and ensconced him in an arm-chair before the bright hearth.

Lord Strathmere's valet was in waiting, and Brabazon did not linger. He made, however, a brief allusion to Chandos, and the baron replied by anathematizing his younger nephew, and swearing a great oath that Chandos should be cast forth in the morning, and if his allowance did not content him he should earn his own living.

The valet pricked up his ears at this, and Brabazon muttered something about the young man being in a desperate mood, and then withdrew.

Lord Strathmere was undressed and put to bed. During the process he ventilated his griefs to his attendant, and indulged in invectives against "that murderous young dog," declaring that he should not feel safe until Chandos was out of his house.

At eleven o'clock the baron was asleep, and

the valet, his duties for the night over, departed to his own quarters in a distant portion of the mansion.

The great stable-clock had struck the hour of one. The snow was still falling softly, ceaselessly, in a white pall.

The pale gloom outside was full of chill and desolation. Within the splendid mansion the lights were nearly all extinguished. The hush and gloom were oppressive.

Soon after the sullen clanging of the clock, with its single booming stroke, Norman Brabazon crept from his room.

A light burned dimly in the lower hall, and in its feeble emanation one might have seen how ghastly pale he was.

His small black eyes gleamed with a murderous light. His thin lips were set together in a tense, hard line. He was nerved to an appalling deed, and looked like incarnate murder.

He crept through the dimness and stillness of the long hall with the stealthiness of a cat. He had removed his shoes, and his feet were muffled in thick stockings. His garments were black. He paused at the door of Ralph Chandos and listened.

The sound of regular breathing came to his ears.

He opened the door softly and looked in. The young man was in bed and asleep.

His portmanteau stood near the door, packed for departure in the morning, as could be seen by the pale glow of the firelight.

Brabazon's features quivered with demonic exultation and hatred.

He crept nearer the bed and glowered upon his young rival.

How noble and handsome was Chandos even in sleep!

Brabazon shook his fist at him in a deadly, silent fury, and crept away as he had come, with cat-like stealth.

Again in the great, dim, upper hall, he moved onward like a shadow to Lord Strathmere's room.

He paused at its door, and peered around him. No one was visible anywhere in the gloom. He opened the door of his uncle's chamber and crept within.

The fire was still burning, and its glow made visible the various articles of furniture, including the bed.

Brabazon's gaze swept the chamber. Keen as it was it failed to note the quiver of the plate glass mirror forming the door of an armoire or wardrobe in a recess near at hand.

The valet was gone. All was safe.

He stole to the bedside.

The old lord was sleeping.

A ray of firelight rendered plainly visible his sharp, high features, his gray hair, his bared and scraggy throat. It was not a noble face that of the Baron of Strathmere, and even in his sleep one could trace upon his visage signs of the ruling passions of his life—parsimony, selfishness, and cruelty.

The Lord of Strathmere had always disliked Chandos, principally because Chandos must inherit the title and estates of Strathmere after him.

The young man was generous, and he esteemed generosity a heinous fault. The young man was loved by household and tenantry, and he knew himself disliked, and this embittered him.

There were a dozen reasons, equally unreasonable, why he hated his younger nephew; but Brabazon was a man after his own heart, and as much as his warped and selfish soul could love anyone, he loved Norman Brabazon.

It had always been a matter of regret to him that Brabazon could not have come next in the succession.

His elder nephew had many of his own faults, and these he esteemed virtues.

He had always been kind to Brabazon, had given him an annual allowance of money double that assigned his heir-apparent, had pushed his fortunes with zeal, and had assisted him to become what he now was, a brilliant if unscrupulous politician, and a candidate for a most important foreign appointment.

One would have thought that Brabazon could not in cold blood destroy a life which had so greatly benefited him—that he could not have stilled for ever a heart that had cherished for him an actual even if narrow affection.

But the tiger creeping on his prey from the shelter of the jungle might have had more compunction of conscience than Norman Brabazon.

The deadly cobra, with its glittering eyes fixed upon a coveted morsel, might sooner have felt relenting in its purpose than this human serpent.

He bent over his sleeping relative and every plausible feature of his swarthy face stiffened and hardened into the semblance of a mask. The baron moved uneasily in his sleep under that basilisk gaze.

The intruder waited in the shelter of the bed-drapery, patient as a red Indian, until his loud breathing was resumed.

Then Brabazon drew from within his coat a dagger, a possession of Ralph Chandos, which had been given the latter by a chum at Oxford, and which he had preserved in his writing-desk as a memorial. The dagger flashed in the firelight as he upraised it.

Again the plate-glass mirror forming the door of the armoire quivered, and a pair of eyes stared out upon the strange scene.

There was a moment's pause on the part of Brabazon, a last look at the hard features of his kinsman, a brief study of the baron's figure, and then the deadly dagger flashed in the air, and was driven swiftly home to the very hilt into Lord Strathmere's heart.

Not a sigh, not a quiver, disturbed the baron's frame. As Brabazon drew forth the dagger the life-blood welled up in a great jet, staining his guilty hand, and the sleeve of his shirt—a garment he had taken from the wardrobe of Chandos at an earlier hour of the evening.

Lord Strathmere was dead, yet his murderer stabbed him again and again to make assurance doubly sure.

And the eyes of the unseen witness lost not one movement of the murderer.

"He's dead," muttered Brabazon at last, with a long breath, upraising his head and listening. "Not an outcry! Not a sound! Everyone is asleep!"

Hiding the blood-stained weapon in the folds of his shirt he crept across the floor, opened the door, listened, and stole into the hall.

He paused at the very threshold of Lord Strathmere's room, his blood seeming to turn to ice in his veins.

For, coming up the stairs without a light, but plainly recognisable in the dimness by reason of his ample proportions, was Millis, the butler.

He paused on the topmost stair, seeing Brabazon at Lord Strathmere's door. The villain remained for an instant, stupefied; then his ready wit came to his aid.

He glided along the hall without a word, opened the door of Chandos's apartment, passed within, and shot the bolt into the lock.

The ruse served its purpose.

"So it was Mr. Ralph," muttered the butler. "What was he doing at this hour in my lord's chamber? He acted strange, too, as if something was wrong."

He hesitated, not knowing whether it might not be his duty to look into the baron's room; but a remembrance of his lordship's temper, and a reflection that Mr. Ralph might have visited his uncle with a view to reconciliation and remained late, decided him to mind his own business, which he did, going to his quarters.

Meanwhile, Brabazon proceeded to weave still closer the deadly net of evidence about his young cousin—the net which he intended should drag him to his doom.

The fire was low in the grate. Chandos was still sound asleep, his sorrows forgotten in the profound slumber that comes to the young and healthy. The intruder's movements were noiseless.

Taking the reeking dagger from its concealment on his person, he thrust it up the warm chimney into a crevice between two bricks, its

handle alone protruding, and that quite out of reach of even keen research.

Then he removed his blood-stained shirt and laid it on the fire.

It flamed up in a quick blaze.

Watching it closely, with a dextrous movement he extracted from the flames one blood-stained cuff, dropping it into the ashes under the grate.

Then he glided into the dressing-room and washed his hands in a basin of water upon the toilet-table, smiling with a demonic joy as he did so.

He had been so noiseless that the sleeper had not even stirred.

His evil work was done.

All that remained was to get to his own room unseen.

He unlocked the door and peered into the hall.

The butler had vanished. Brabazon stole along the hall, gained his own door, and entered his apartment.

His first care was to light the candles he had extinguished, and to examine his remaining garments and his person.

Not a drop of blood was visible upon him.

Not a sign or token of his awful crime was anywhere to be seen.

His lips writhed into a wicked and exultant smile, and he dropped into an easy-chair before his bright hearth, and rubbed his guilty hands together in the warm blaze.

He had achieved his guilty success.

All he had longed for and striven to attain was almost in his grasp.

He suddenly remembered that he had forgotten to lock his door, and to extinguish his lights.

He arose, blew out the candles, and advanced toward the door.

At the same moment it opened, softly and noiselessly, and a man crept into his presence.

Brabazon stared at him as if he had been a gorgon, and looked as if turned to stone. The villain's sickly pallor, his starting eyes, his wild visage, attested his horror and terror.

The man was no servant of the house. Brabazon reeled back against a table as he recognised him.

He was Thomas Crowl, the son of the former pedagogue of the village, a man naturally shrewd and keen-witted, who had received an ordinary education, but who had in his boyhood thrown off the shackles of parental control, and indulged in dissipation and idleness.

For the last year or two Crowl had been in London living by his wits, but had recently returned home upon a visit to his aged father.

He had a bold, bad, reckless face, but no one had ever suspected him of readiness to commit a crime.

What had brought him here within the walls of Strathmere mansion at this hour?

Brabazon tried to ask the question, but his stiff lips refused to articulate.

Thomas Crowl sidled up to him and laid one hand upon his arm.

"I saw it all!" he hissed.

Brabazon put his hand to his heart and dropped into the nearest chair.

"I was hid in the old man's wardrobe," said Crowl. "I was a witness of the murder!"

Brabazon sprang up as if electrified, and made for the bell-rope, with a wild idea of denouncing his visitor as the murderer, thus sacrificing his nefarious schemes, but protecting himself.

Again Crowl laid a fierce grip upon him, reading his purpose.

"Hold!" he whispered hotly. "Two can play at that game. Don't be too fast! I can be bought!"

Brabazon faced about, beginning to recover from his awful terror.

"What were you doing in the wardrobe?" he asked, huskily.

"I don't mind telling you, since you won't be likely to betray me," returned Crowl. "I was hard-up, and I'm thinking of marrying. I know what everybody knows, that Lord Strathmere is miserly and keeps money in the house. I crept in at dusk and found my way to his room

and hid there for hours, thinking I'd creep out in the dead of the night and rob his safe that everybody knows he keeps in his bedroom. I was hid there all the evening. After my lord went to bed he seemed restless for a while and I kept mum. When he had fallen into a sound sleep I crept out and began an examination of his room and effects. I was at that when I thought I heard a sound in the hall. I had only time to slip into the wardrobe when you came in."

"So you were there for purposes of robbery?" said Brabazon, with a sneer.

"And you were there for murder!" replied Crowl, coolly. "I left my purpose unaccomplished, fearing any plunder I might get would hang me. You must make up my loss. I can't see all your little game, Mr. Brabazon, but you expect to make money out of this night's work, and you shall share it with me!"

"I will—I will!"

"That's enough. You won't break your promise, I'll go bail. I'll remind you of it later. As you are to be my banker hereafter, you may give me twenty pounds to-night."

Brabazon procured his pocket-book and counted out the amount named, his hands shaking as he did so.

"Give me the pocket-book and all. We won't stick at trifles. I'll get out as I came in," said Crowl, pocketing the money, "and not leave a trace of my presence, you may be sure. You'd better get to bed, my friend, if you intend to show up natural in the morning!"

He slipped from the room, traversed the great hall like a ghost, and entered a guest-chamber which opened upon a balcony.

He let himself out upon this balcony, closed his way of egress, and clambered to the ground by means of the great ivy that nearly covered that side of the building.

He stood in the midst of the thickly-falling snow, breathless, when a hand was laid suddenly upon his arm, and a figure was outlined close beside him in the pale gloom.

With an oath, he sprang backward several paces.

A woman's low, mocking laugh restored him to his senses.

"Is it you, Meg?" he asked, angrily.

"It is I, Thomas Crowl," was the answer. "I saw you enter this house like a thief hours ago, and I've been watching for you ever since. You act scared, Tom, just as if you'd been committing murder! You've been up to some mischief, that I know!"

"St!" whispered Crowl. "Come away, Meg!"

He seized her arm and hurried her away into the whirling mist of snow that blotted out their track even as they went.

And in his lonely, luxurious chamber of the grand old mansion, the master of Strathmere lurked lay stark and ghastly, his pinched face upturned to the pale firelight, his heart stilled for ever.

Out into the wild, white night his soul had flown at the wicked will of a murderer, but his body lay here a silent horror, rigid and white as the falling snow.

In his own bed, asleep in the profound slumber of youth and health, was Ralph Chandos, in blessed unconsciousness of the awful fate lowering darkly above him.

And in his apartment, in his bed also, Norman Brabazon lay broad awake, meditating upon the peculiar contretemps that had marred the full perfection of his plans, yet exulting in the strength of the net he had so skillfully woven.

"It's all right!" he muttered. "Crowl would never dare betray his presence in this house to-night and so disgrace his father and stamp himself as a common burglar and robber. He would not dare, for I would fix the crime on him. But money has bought him, body and soul! Sleep, Ralph Chandos! For this is your last night of peace and hope on earth! To-morrow will see you in a felon's cell, abandoned by all whom you have called friends, stripped of position, honour, love! And I—I shall be Baron Strathmere!"

(To be Continued.)

CONVICTED.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE conversation between Mrs. Ingestre and Alex, which had been temporarily interrupted by the approach of some of the guests, was renewed by her.

"Now the point I desire to reach, after this long preamble, Miss Strange," said Mrs. Ingestre, is this: Do you expect to remain with Lady Vivian after her marriage?"

"No, no," said Alex, hastily. "It would be impossible."

"I thought so. Lady Vivian will have a companion in her husband, and will not need your services. The marriage will take place soon. I know the marquis well enough to know that, after his years of courtship, he will press for a short betrothal. When the Lady Vivian releases you from your engagement where shall you go?"

Alex felt a thrill of dismay.

"I do not know," she said. "I have not thought of such a possibility."

"No? You should think of it, Miss Strange. Nothing is more commendable in the young than forethought and prudence. I have bestowed thought upon your future. I like your face, my dear, and I should like your sunny presence about me. If you were not to leave Lady Vivian, nothing could tempt me to speak thus to you. But you will soon want a home. Will you accept one with me?"

"With you?"

"Yes, I would like a young companion, to read and talk to me, and to perform towards me the offices of a daughter. I am childless, with a small income, sufficient for two. I am an invalid, with diseases too intricate for the management of a country physician. When the marquis brings home his bride I must leave Mount Heron. I should like to settle in London, with a sympathising companion to nurse me when ill, to give me my medicines, and to wait upon me quite as a daughter. I cannot pay you a magnificent salary, but you shall not have reason to complain of me. What do you say?"

"You have taken me quite by surprise, madame. I do not quite know what to say," said Alex, at a loss in what terms to couch her refusal.

"You need not decide to-night," said Mrs. Ingestre, pleasantly. "When Lady Vivian goes up to London to arrange for her trousseau, two or three weeks hence, can you not come to me upon a little visit? We could then get acquainted with each other. The marquis will treat you as an honoured guest, and I shall be delighted to have you, as I shall be very lonely," added the lady. "Our guests leave at the same time that the Lady Vivian and her guests take flight, and the castle will be doubly lonely and gloomy after having so much company. I will arrange the matter with Lady Vivian myself."

The girl's heart gave a great bound.

To be a guest in the old castle—to be upon the scene of the Mountheron tragedy—seemed to her a great step towards success.

That in making use of her presence in the house to work out her mission would be in any sense treasonable to her entertainers or improper never even occurred to her.

She felt that Providence had interposed in her behalf—that Providence was guiding her steps—that every movement she made, even blindly and falteringly, was an approach to the goal she sought.

Her eyes glowed with swift splendour, like blue stars, and her mignonette face was radiant as she thanked Mrs. Ingestre for the invitation.

"I will come," she said, "if Lady Vivian consents. I should dearly like to visit this castle, to explore its ancient rooms, and hear the legends connected with them. I thank you, madame, for the prospect of a very great pleasure."

"Then, since you think you will like it here, why not arrange to stay until Lady Vivian's marriage?" said Mrs. Ingestre. "As a visitor, you know. And if you so decide, you shall go with me to London as my companion. Of course, if you arrange to visit me here, you can be my companion as well as guest, but we will not speak of salary until I leave Mount Heron."

Alex comprehended that Mrs. Ingestre was thus seeking to secure her services without pay, but the privilege of a week's or month's stay at the castle was worth a fortune to her. She was more than ever convinced that Providence had interfered on her behalf.

"Very well," said Mrs. Ingestre, noting her delight with great complacency. "I will see Lady Vivian on the subject soon—possibly to-morrow. Ah, my lord," she added, as Lord Kingscourt came up and claimed Alex's attention. "Will you have a seat near us?"

"Thank you, no, madame. I came to rob you of Miss Strange," said the young earl, courteously. "I wish to show her the rare orchids in the conservatory. They are something wonderful. Will you come and examine them, Miss Strange?"

Alex accepted the invitation, blushing, and moved away with Lord Kingscourt in the direction of the conservatory.

"I am fortunate," thought Mrs. Ingestre, looking after the girl with intense satisfaction. "I can keep her here to wait upon me without paying her a farthing, and I shall have the credit of hiring a companion, besides the pleasure of her company. I am always dull when we have no guests. Yes, yes, I am fortunate. The girl will be a treasure, and I won't have to pay her—not for months yet!"

It was the morning after Lord Mountheron's dinner party.

The guests at Clyffebourne were employed out of doors, some at lawn tennis and some at archery.

The air was mild for October, and the sun was shining.

The sea glittered like a vast mirror, save when, now and then, a gust of wind ruffled its surface.

Lady Vivian Clyffe had taken part in the amusements of her guests, and had shot her arrow straight at the centre of the target, after which brilliant success she had wandered into the edge of the park and seated herself upon a bench.

Alex, whom the guests had been compelled to receive as their social equal, still did not find herself on comfortable terms with any of them, owing to the secret dislike and jealousy of Lady Markham, the Lady Vivian's chaperone; and, upon Lady Vivian's withdrawal, she retired to the library, finding occupation in a book.

The Lady Vivian was in the midst of a reverie which, to judge from her countenance, was both painful and perplexing, when a step was heard upon the green sward, and Lord Mountheron presented himself before her.

There was something striking and unusual in the appearance of the marquis, and which at once enlisted her attention and interest.

His fair and gentle face was flushed; his soft blue eyes were filled with an unwonted anxiety! he was nervous and ill at ease, whereas he was ordinarily the most self-possessed of gentlemen.

His morning toilet was irreproachable, and exhibited even more than usual care.

There was that in his manner that indicated to Lady Vivian that a crisis in their relations to each other had arrived.

She received him graciously and with apparent self-possession, although her heart quickened its beatings.

(To be Continued.)

[Owing to pressure of space, we are compelled to defer the continuation of WHO DID IT; OR, THE WARD'S SECRET, till next week.]



[A LEGACY.]

MISS WYTHE'S TRUNK.

An old-fashioned, roomy, yellow-house, standing back from the road, shaded by majestic elms.

A white fence in front, and a large black mulberry tree in one corner, where the children had merry times.

This was the parsonage.

On one side was the flower-garden. On the other, at a little distance, the river traced its shining way through broad shining fields; and across the bridge was the white village, with its one church.

Behind the house were barns and cow-yard, and well-swept—a real, old-fashioned well with its “moss-covered bucket” ever ready for the thirsty labourers.

Here lived the grey-haired pastor, who, for more than fifty years, had met his people Sunday after Sunday in the village church, and in his simple, earnest, kindly way talked to them of eternal realities, and whose work-day life among them had borne witness to his sincerity—a better sermon than he wrote.

Here he had mingled with them in every social and festive scene.

Had baptised their children, and married their brides.

He had brought them sympathy and comfort in sickness and sorrow, and buried their dead in sure hope of life immortal.

Here dwelt the “little mother,” as her sons often called her—the dearest, sprightliest, black-

eyed grandma that ever made “cymbals” and turnovers by the bushel “to have handy for the children.”

There were four daughters and three sons, and as if the fireside and table were not full enough, the pastor's slender income was eked out by a summer boarder.

Year after year, with the first of June, came Miss Wythe, a good old soul, but odd as the days are long.

But they were used to her ways at the parsonage, and humoured her whims, as this made her “feel at home” in grandma's kindly parlance.

For her the pleasant spare chamber was duly swept and garnished, the white dimity curtains freshly “done up,” and looped back from the western windows, where in the elm close by the robin brooded, and in full view were river and woods and village, with encircling hills beyond. The bare, painted floor was clean.

The plain, old-fashioned furniture tidy and well-kept.

The patch-covered easy-chair by the window, the white toilet-cover, and valance around the high “four-poster” bed, gave an air of comfort and cosyness to the room.

And with the sunshine and sweet air laden with rose-fragrance and bird-song, and the general sense of quiet and rest and home-welcome, the old lady liked it, as well she might. She liked the table, too.

The plain, abundant fare, so nicely cooked, and served on old-fashioned blue India ware, the juicy meats, the light, tender, well-baked

bread and golden butter, the rich milk and yellow cream, the sweet corn and great white lima beans, and all other summer vegetables fresh from the garden.

The fruits and puddings, and the pleasant home-chat that gave the food a still keener relish.

She liked the family, even the wild, rollicking boys, who were boys to the full, and the greatest rogues in the neighbourhood, if they were the minister's sons.

He had tried, poor man, as he would have said, to “command his household like Abraham,” to govern them by strict, old-fashioned rules of duty and right.

But, as sometimes happens, the strong will inherited from himself reappeared pretty decidedly in the young sprouts.

And the love of fun, to which he was himself no stranger, often overswept all barriers, despite of many a “dreadful talk” and more dreadful suasion, not at all of a moral kind.

The boys liked Miss Wythe, for she never told tales about them, even when once or twice they invaded her own domain.

When she found, bolt upright in her easy-chair, a woodchuck, with her glasses astride its nose and her knitting in its paws, the good soul only laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks, and said:

“Boys will be boys.”

And father was never the wiser.

It is but fair to the boys, however, who were listening in the shadow of the lilac bushes, to say that her magnanimity so touched their hearts that this was the last prank they ever played off upon her.

Sarah, the eldest girl, tall and staid, married early a wealthy man, and went to live in a neighbouring town.

Martha, or Patty, as she was oftener called, blue-eyed, brown-haired Patty, was a brisk, busy, tidy housewife, her mother's right hand in all domestic concerns, willing waiter for “father and the boys” and everybody else, chatty and lively the live-long day.

Anna was quiet and thoughtful, with no relish for household toil, but an unconquerable longing for books and a ready pen.

Now and then the little mother found, hidden away in some nook or corner, verses which she knew could have been written only by one hand.

And these she treasured silently, aware that they would win no favour from the other side of the house, and draw down upon her dark-eyed girl the ridicule of her teasing brothers.

Not a word of fault-finding came from the little mother, even when, one morning, as she was very busy in the kitchen, after waiting a long time for the meal, which Anna had been sent to sift, she went up to the meal-room, and found her sitting on the floor with a book in her lap, her right hand slowly moving the sieve back and forth, every particle of meal having sifted through, and the thought of replenishing not having as yet entered her mind.

Poor Anna!

One of the roguish brothers had followed mother on tip-toe, “bound to see what Nan was up to,” and it was years before she heard the last of it.

But though the mother's hand might be weary the mother's heart waited patiently, hoping “Anna would make something by-and-by.” So she did.

A patient, cultured, Christian woman, faithful to the duty nearest her, though loving her books passing well.

An affectionate, companionable daughter and sister, a dearly prized friend.

And inheriting her father's gift, the day came when, though she never won fame—she had too much of other work to do for that—her pen conveyed to many a heart words of hope and comfort, and stimulus to nobler living.

Many a tried and well-nigh discouraged soul blessed the unknown friend with her timely cheer and aid.

And when the little mother's life path tended down hill no hand smoothed the way with

gentler helpfulness, no voice was more tender, no ministrations more loving than hers.

Mary, the youngest, was Miss Wythe's favourite.

A dark-haired, black-eyed gipsy, bright and merry and good-natured, though with a high spirit and resolute will, that weighed nothing against her in the old lady's mind, as those were not foreign to her own disposition.

"Pops" she always would call her, for some inexplicable reason of her own.

"Pops" or "My Pops," was the only one admitted fully admitted into her confidence, the only one whose advice she ever asked.

And Pops she declared should have her "big trunk" when she had no longer any need of it, though what need she had, or what use she made of it while she lived, no mortal could say.

Another trunk, a smaller one, held her clothes for real use and wearing, and this was unpacked, like other people's, soon after her arrival every June, and the bureau and closet called into service.

But "the big trunk" remained in mysterious silence.

The summer waxed and waned, and it left with its owner for winter quarters, to reappear punctually the 1st of June.

Summer after summer came and went, and they began to see that the old lady was failing.

Her step grew feeble, and her sight dim.

"At midsummer, when the hay was down," and its pure fragrance drifted in at the open window, she went to sleep peacefully, glad to be there in the old place she had learned to love best, soothed and blessed by kind hands and loving hearts, and with the tender words of prayer last reaching her failing ear as the silver-haired minister knelt at her bedside.

There was honest grief that day within the parsonage walls, for Miss Wythe had long been regarded more as a friend than boarder. But after while they missed her less, and life settled again into its wonted grooves.

The trunk, which she had really, as she promised, willed to "her Pops," stood just as she left it.

One day the sisters gathered around to explore its mysteries—with curiosity, to be sure, yet with reverent touch.

It proved to be stored with rich, old-fashioned dress stuffs, heavy brocaded silks, dark, glossy satin, a velvet cloak.

But all made up, and of course in a style utterly obsolete.

"Look at this, girls," said Mary, as she drew out a blue silk besprinkled with silver leaves and held it up to view.

The material was beautiful.

But the scant skirt, the baby waist, reaching about three inches below the arm-eyes, the short puffed sleeves and low, square neck. No wonder they laughed.

Then came what had been a white satin, and probably worn as a bridesmaid's dress, made in similar fashion, and yellow with age, slippers and gloves to match.

There was a maroon, watered satin, with high neck and long sleeves, to be sure, but of hardly later date.

A pink silk skirt and black velvet bodice. A heavily-embroidered collar eight inches deep, with sailor corners, and yards of old lace and ribbons.

An enormous calash of green silk lined with cherry, embroidered silk stockings, and a bead-work reticule, completed the list of hoarded treasures.

Mary looked half-amused, half-disappointed, and wholly perplexed.

"What shall we do with the things, girls?" said she; "they're so outlandish. They won't pay to make over, will they?"

"I doubt it," came from Anna.

"Oh, I guess they will," said brisk little Patty, who was never afraid of work of any description. "We'll get Miss Simonds here and see what she can do. The materials are elegant; we never could buy anything like them, you know, and the parish would be scandalised

if we could. Miss Simonds will tell everybody how we came by the things, so we shan't be afraid to wear them to church."

"Yes, so she will. That's quite an idea, Patty. And, by-the-way, you must have the blue brocade."

"Oh, no, Pops, dear. You must keep that yourself."

"But I want you to have it; it will just suit your complexion."

And Little Patty, knowing from her sister's positive tone that it was no use to argue, was delighted beyond measure.

Miss Simonds came with her shears and patterns.

And after that the three girls were busy enough for some weeks.

Mary insisted on sharing with Anna and Martha, just as if the trunk had been given jointly.

But Sarah said she had all the clothes she could wear, and did not care for anything.

For a little time the garments fashioned with so much care and toil looked rich and pretty.

But in a few months there was scarcely an article which had not wholly given out.

The beautiful shining silks split in the folds where they had lain so long.

And, as Mary said, the whole affair of the trunk proved a weariness, a vanity and a vexation of spirit.

"Well, children," said the minister, as they were talking over the matter around the open fire in the study, where the family often gathered of evenings, "I am sorry for your disappointment, and the loss of your time and work. But I think you found one thing in the old lady's trunk that you have not mentioned—a sermon, that, summed up in concise headings, might read like this:

"Better wear out than rust out. Better use for ourselves than hoard, whether worldly goods, or time, talent, and opportunities."

"If," said the little mother, "Miss Wythe had bought a few of those costly things that she could wear out, the money left over would have gone far to help some needy creature; to feed, and clothe, and teach some orphan child, for instance. But isn't it bed-time, girls?"

M. O. J.

PROFESSOR BLACKIE IN LOVE.

In a recent lecture on Scottish Song, Professor Blackie said:—It was a mistake to imagine that the poet only fell in love with a pretty face. A fool might do that, a fool might fall in love with a wax doll. (Loud laughter.) Divine love was the ambitious admiration of excellence, or the rapturous recognition of a divinely planted ideal. (Applause.) Every man was a poet when he was in love. Everyone did not write sonnets, but his fancy took a flight as if borne on wings. (Loud laughter.) Was there any miserable wretch here who never felt love? (Roars of laughter.) If so, he was extremely sorry for him. (Renewed laughter.)

He might tell them his blessed experience when he was first in love. (Laughter.) He lost all interest in books, and went up by Bonaly, and over the Pentland Hills, singing songs the whole day, and they ended with "Mary, Mary, Mary." (Great laughter.) Then when he ended his singing he wrote sonnets, and binding them with silver and blue ribbon, he despatched them to Mary. (Laughter.) All that was pure joy; no doubt there came a sad day afterwards, when "Mary" would have nothing to do with "Johnny Blackie." (Great laughter.)

He went about mourning for two days, and the first day took no dinner—(laughter)—but that was not much sorrow compared to the joy of the two months' singing. (Applause.) He did not shoot himself, for he had the pleasure of being six times in love since. (Laughter.) When he was in love his soul was like an instrument that angels had come down and played upon. (Loud laughter.)

Love did not require fine surroundings. For

himself he preferred the smell of a byre, especially if there was a milkmaid there, to the finest drawing-room at the West-end.

(Here the learned professor sung a verse of a song "When the kye comes hame," and followed this with a verse of "Kelvin Grove" in good voice and exuberant spirit. The singing was greeted with loud applause and cries of "encore.")

HELPING A LAME DOG OVER A STILE.

JESSIE BALL sat in her own room with two letters open before her; each contained an offer of marriage from a man who seemed to love her, and who was what might be considered a good match for a plain farmer's daughter with a pretty face and no fortune.

Moreover, Jessie liked each of them well enough to have been sure of herself had the other never made his appearance, and if the letters had not come by the same post she would perhaps have answered the first very favourably, but now she was embarrassed with riches.

Two offers in one day were certainly enough to turn any girl's head and confuse her judgment.

Reading Jack Markham's letter, she thought how tall he was, what fine broad shoulders he had, how well he rowed and rode and drove.

Then glancing at Will Westerfield's, she remembered his beautiful black eyes and his sweet voice; he sang divinely, and she might have either of these men for her life mate.

The thought was delicious. Only which?

Quite unable to make up her mind, the girl thrust both the letters into her pocket, tied on her broad straw hat, and went out into the woods, hoping that some new thought would come to her amidst the leafy shadow, but none did.

As she walked along she remembered how Will had gone nutting with her in autumn, and how well he looked, standing under the trees with flecks of golden light kissing his hair; what pretty compliments he paid her too.

Yes, and she did let him have one kiss—just one—that day. Perhaps she really ought to choose Will after that?

But then, had she not gone out on the lake in Jack's boat, and had he not rowed her over so far, ever so long, until the sun set and the air grew chill?

And then he wrapped her up in the great travelling shawl he had brought, and she did let him have just one too.

Surely there could be no harm in just one little kiss? She was no more committed to one than to the other.

At last she sat down under a great tree, and shutting her eyes, tried, as she expressed it, to "think hard."

The result of her cogitation was that Will Westerfield was really quite as nice as Jack Markham, but that the girls admired Jack most, and that there would be in consequence more triumph in carrying Jack off from one and all of them.

Then he had a fashionable aunt, Mrs. Fitz Jones, who knew all the fine people in town and who would be sure to invite them.

Yes, she would accept Jack.

Then she stooped down and picked up one of last year's chestnut burrs, and gave a little sigh to poor Will's memory.

And just then she heard something in the road, on the other side of the great tree, and crouched down out of sight, for she had a great fear of that unpleasant specimen of the genus homo dubbed the Tramp.

In an instant more, however, she heard a sound that drove her terror away—a little doleful whine—and peeping over the bushes, saw, not a man, but a dog—a miserable little mongrel creature with a broken leg, that, having come to a stile which crossed the wood path, and finding himself too lame to climb it, sat down before it and began to cry.

"Poor little creature!" said Jessie to herself. "If I was sure he would not bite, I'd help him over."

She hesitated; compassion fought hard with those dreadful stories of hydrophobia which she had often listened to.

She gathered up her skirts in her hand and was about to test the temper of the poor brute, when a sound—this time a man's step, without doubt—sent her back to her hiding-place.

Someone came striding through the wood; some one paused before the stile. Jessie peeped through the leaves and saw Jack Markham, tall, strong and handsome as ever—a man to win a woman's heart by his beauty.

He stood looking down at the poor brute. He spoke to himself aloud. It is the habit of almost every man when alone in the woods.

"Brutes like you ought to be shot," he said. "I hate a mongrel."

Then he lifted his foot and kicked the poor little thing out of the way, leaped over the stile and strode on, leaving the poor creature lying yelping where he had cast it. His footfall was as firm and true as a soldier's, but Jessie did not listen to it gladly.

"I wish he had not kicked the dog," she said to herself. "I wonder whether he is cruel? What a terrible thing it would be to marry a man who was cruel."

Again she mustered up courage to go to the poor dog's assistance, and again a sound drove her back.

This time it was a whistle—a clear, shrill whistle that she knew very well. No one but Will Westerfield whistled so sweetly in all the country round.

But she did not wish to meet him. She shrank back and hid herself once more amongst the bushes, while that sweet whistle came nearer and nearer, and suddenly stopped just on the other side of the great chestnut tree which concealed her.

"Poor fellow! poor fellow!" cried a voice that was soft as a woman's. "Come here. What is the matter? Broken your leg, eh? There—I'll set it. Keep quiet now. Don't you know your friends?"

Then Jessie, from her peep-hole, saw Will Westerfield take out his penknife and cut some tiny splints from a branch, tear his handkerchief in strips, and set the limb and bind it up.

"Hungry?" he next asked. "Well, poor fellow, have patience. I'll give you a dinner as soon as we get home. You shall have a bed in the corner of my room until you're well, and we'll fatten you a little."

Then he lifted the dog in his arms, lightly leaped the stile, and was off, taking up the tune he had dropped again.

Jessie listened as it filled the air with sweetness, and died softly away in the distance, and tears came into her eyes.

"A man who would be so kind to a poor dog in the woods would never be unkind to a wife," she said to herself. "And, oh, he is twice as nice as Jack Markham."

Then she hurried home, and without a doubt in her mind wrote two letters.

In one she told Jack Markham that she was sorry, but she must say no. In the other she told Will Westerfield that she was glad to say yes.

Her woman's heart taught her that she might be frankly loving with such a man.

And Will was very happy, and I scarcely think that Jessie ever told him that she married him because he "helped a lame dog over a stile." But it was a very good reason after all.

The tenderest are the bravest, and will be while men are, and, as Jessie said, a man who would be so kind to a miserable dog that he met in the lonely woods, would certainly be kind and gentle to his wife.

M. K. D.

NEVER seek to be entrusted with your friend's secret; for no matter how faithfully you may keep it, you will be liable in a thousand contingencies to the suspicion of having betrayed it.

FACETIÆ

WHAT HE THOUGHT.

"Home's the place for boys," said a stern parent to his son, who was fond of going out at night.

"That's just what I think when you drive me off to school every morning," said the son.

DRAMATIC MEMS.

As Temple Bar is doomed and done for, it is seasonable to find the Olympic producing "Dun-Bar."

Another Atrocity—Shooting "Stars" at the Folly.

Boxing displays have become a scandal—all but "Musical Boxing" at the Gaiety.

They have brought out the "Idiot of the Mountain" at the Queen's as the "Omadhaun." "O mad haunt of the drama!" is the natural apostrophe to the house. —Funny Folks.

CIVILISATION: THE FIRST SYMPTOM.

("The Japanese have had their first railway accident."—The Hornet.)

Come, this is a stride; you are getting on sweetly.

Oh, race with the curious noses and eyes;

We always allowed you were doomed to completely

Eclipse us in all things that make a man wise.

And this news is a really encouraging thesis

From which we can picture a future sublime—

Oh, you only had thirty or so knocked to pieces?

Well, don't be ashamed, you will get on in time.

The number is small, we allow, for a lover

Of "Awful Train Accident: Fullset Details!"

But one can't, of course, rival the Smashem and Over

When one's only just managed to lay down the rails.

But its promising, truly, and certainly shows yours

A destiny rip'ning for civilised joys—

Wife-kicking, torpedoes, detective disclosures,

Divorce cases, ulsters, Obstruction, "Our Boys."

We see it—full soon will your maidens be rinking,

"Whoa Emma!" shall be your new popular lay,

Your ironclads take to exploding or sinking

In a thoroughly Saxon and civilised way.

We see you possessed of your civilised "liners,"

Describing your civilised vessels that leak,

And your two or three thousand quite civilised miners,

Blown up—to begin with, let's say, twice a week.

This accident shows you're a land that progressing,

You'll develop in time our starvation and strikes,

Our genius for spouting, and muddling, and messing,

Our Grundys, our Dodgers, our Producers, our Sikes.

But don't be too proud—no, you shouldn't yet, really;

You may journey by steam—in a chimney-pot hat.

But without an A. Tooth and a Dr. Kenecaly

No country is civilised—recollect that! —Funny Folks.

THE NEW ARISTOCRACY.

The following colloquy comes from an unknown source:

"Ephrahem, come to your mudder, boy. What you been?"

"Playin' wid de white folks' chilum."

"You is, hey? See hyar, chile, you'll broke yer old mudder's heart, an' brung her gray hairs in de grave wid yer recklunness an' carryin's on wid evil assucyashons. Hahn't I raised you up in de way you should ought to go?"

"Yethum."

"Hahn't I bin kine an' tender wid you an' treated you like my own chile, which you is?"

"Yethum."

"Hahn't I reezoned wid you, an' prayed wid you, an' deplored de good Lord to wrap you in His buzzom?"

"Yethum."

"An' isn't I yer nater'l detector and guarden fo' de law?"

"Yethum."

"Well, den, do you s'pose I see a-gwine to hab yer morals ruptured by de white trash? No, sah! Got in de house dis instep; an' if I eber cotch you 'municatin' wid de white trash any mo', I'll broke yer black head wid a brick."

IDEALS.

(Of the wife, by a Bachelor.)

ALWAYS to look nice, and to be nice.

To dress on £30 a year, and to wear black silk dresses, lace collars and cuffs, and dead gold ornaments.

To approve of smoking all over the house.

To adore her husband, and to drop her mother and sisters, and all her own relations.

To delight in snug little dinners to all my chums, without stupid women to spoil the fun.

To keep the house on £300 a year.

Never to have headaches or any other form of illness.

Always to keep her figure, no matter how many children there may be.

To attend to me, and sit up at night whenever there is anything the matter with me.

To sew buttons on my shirt, darn my socks, and look after my things.

Always to be ready when I choose to take her out.

Never to grumble when I don't choose to take her out.

To have no five o'clock teas.

(Of the husband, by a Spinster.)

To be so handsome.

Not to smoke, or use a latch-key.

To take me out shopping whenever I want.

To cut all his horrid bachelor friends.

Never to admire any woman but me.

Always to be delighted when dear mamma or the girls come to stop with us.

To pay all my bills without grumbling, and give me all the money I ask.

To take the children out for a walk, or to the Pantomime or the Circus, whenever I want him and them out of the way.

To give me an opera-box, and not be everlasting in it himself.

To take his name off at his Clubs.

Never to ask me where I have been.

To come to Church every Sunday.

To get my name on at Prince's and take his own off.

Never to come to my five o'clock teas.

—Punch's Pocket Book, 1878.

SHARP.

"At what age were you married?" asked she inquisitively.

But the other lady was equal to the emergency, and quietly responded:

"At the parson-age."

NUTS FOR THE NEW YORKERS.

OUR American friends have really done us so many kindly offices recently by means of the Atlantic cable, predicting storms, informing us when coming bad weather would "strike" the British Isles, and manifesting so much Yankee

acuteness in fortelling what is going to happen, that it seems only wise to seek their help in other matters beside those connected with weather. Will they now kindly send us word, for instance—

Whether there will be any real skating this winter?
 What is going to be done with Temple Bar?
 Whether we shall have any snow this winter?
 When Cleopatra's Needle is coming to London?
 How many post-cards Mr. Gladstone will write this year?
 Where Colonel Henderson will find a batch of high-class detectives?
 When the Law Courts are going to be completed? —Judy.

FASHIONABLE FIXTURES.

(Predicted for next season by our Colney Hatchwell Correspondent.)

MONDAY:

Grand all fresco morning concert at six o'clock, a.m., to be held in Starborough Park, the seat of Lady Squallatone.

The artists to be selected from the Workhouse Casual Ward, assisted by the Swampshire Bones-and-Banjo Amateurs.

Entrance, five guineas a head.

Gentlemen over eighty to be admitted for half price simply on producing their certificates of baptism.

Profits (if there be any) to be given to the Organ-Grinders' Homeward Emigration Fund and the Society for Suppression of Street-Musical Mendicancy.

TUESDAY:

Polo match at the North Pole, between the club of Polo Bears and the Junior Arctic Fox Club.

To be followed by a snow ball, for the benefit of the frozen-out-of-elbows Jolly Gardeners of Greenland.

Tickets, sixpence each, inclusive of split sodas and strawberry cream icebergs, to be supplied by Grunter.

WEDNESDAY:

Meeting of the drags of the National Humane Society, and procession, with flags flying, to the Alexandra Palace, in order to take tiffin with the Nubian Caravan.

THURSDAY:

Bazaar and fancy fair to be held in the Thames tunnel in aid of the Asylum for the Relief of Decayed Cheesemongers.

Articles of high art needlework, such as embroidered tea-cloths, to be rigidly excluded, and lady stall-keepers to exhibit none but things of their own making.

N.B.—The penny trumpet band of the East Wessex Volunteers will be engaged for the occasion, and lotteries for lollipops will be sanctioned, after luncheon, by the managing committee.

FRIDAY:

Episcopal lawn-tennis match at Lords. Gold cup given for the championship. To be contended for by members of the Court of Convocation.

Players to appear in their shirt-leaves, or else to be disqualified.

Gate-money to be given to the funds of the Society for Augmentation of Poor Curates, by supplying them with soup tickets and hot suppers upon Sundays.

SATURDAY:

Perambulator races in the park of the Orleans Plum Club.

Babies to be handicapped according to their weight, and no nursemaid to run except attended by a tall soldier.

At nightfall a torpedo tournament by lime-light, to be followed by a display of the new volcanic fireworks imported from Vesuvius.

—Punch Pocket Book, 1878.

MAN AND MONEY.

"Time has not changed me," said Seedyman,

when a well-worn victim refused the customary half-crown.

"No, my boy," was the reply; "you're such a palpable duffer—he can't."

—Fun Almanack, 1878.

"This is too serious a matter to make light of," as the whale said to the man who was dipping the oil out of his head.

THE FOOTSTEPS THAT NEVER COME.

The window overlooks the street,
 And the casement is broad and high;
 And the face is tender and sad and sweet

That watcheth the passers-by.
 Tick! tick! how slow the moments go!

Tramp! tramp! ah, must it be
 That on and on the years will flow,
 And on and on the footsteps go,
 And none come to comfort thee!
 That other gates will still swing wide,
 That loved ones seek home's bright fireside,

While you wait, in the lonely even-tide.

For footsteps that never come!
 You have known the best that there is in life.

All the blessings that youth could bring;

You were called by the sweet, sweet name of wife,

And have worn love's wedding-ring;
 You have felt the touch of a baby-hand,

And the thrill of a rosy kiss;

And there are those who would patiently stand

And bear the pain of a broken band
 Could they have but known your bliss.

And though you grieve, as grieve you may,

In your darkened home, time passes away,

And not long will your mourning spirit say,

"The footsteps never will come!"

So lay the cluster of dark-brown hair
 By the shining, golden curl,

And joy that your wedded life was fair,
 And give thanks for the baby girl.

And when, from your casement wide and high,

You watch the throng in the street,
 And never a friendly face draws nigh,

Oh, turn your eyes to the broad, blue sky.

Where sundered households meet!

Perchance, by that brighter, crystal gate,

The babe you mourn, and your wedded mate,

Still hand in hand, are there to wait
 For the footsteps yet to come. L. S. U.

STATISTICS.

PATENT BUSINESS OF THE WORLD.—The following abstract, prepared from the official records, shows the remarkable increase of patent business in the principal countries of the world during the past thirty years. The figures first in order for each country refer to the patents granted in the year 1846 and the second figures refer to the year 1876:—Great Britain, 403, 3,485; Canada, 38, 1,252; Austria, 406 (in 1853), 1,294; Baden, 9, 187; Bavaria, 112, 217; Belgium, averaged 400, 2,657; France, 2,750, 5,734; Italy, 224 (in 1855), 538; Prussia, 55, 461; Sweden and Norway, 58, 298; United States of America, 619, 17,026; Wurtemberg, 8,256. Russian patent business has been almost stationary during the thirty years, the official list in no case having been more than 100 patents.

Thus the total patents in the above countries for the years first quoted were 5,303, as against 33,931 in the year 1876. It may be explained, however, that the 33,938 patents do not represent an equal number of inventions, as many of the better class of inventions are patented in several countries simultaneously.

GEMS.

He who, with health, has a true wife, a dutiful child, and a true friend, may laugh adversity to scorn, and defy the world.

Most men call fretting a minor fault, a foible, and not a vice. There is no vice, save drunkenness, which can so utterly destroy the peace, the happiness of a home.

The sweetest, the most clinging affection is often shaken by the lightest breath of unkindness, as the delicate rings and tendrils of the vine are agitated by the faintest air that blows in summer.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

RICE CROQUETTES.—Boil one-half pound of best rice in one and one-half pints of milk and a tablespoonful butter; put the milk on cold; when it comes to a boil set it where it will only simmer until soft; then add a quarter pound of white sugar and the grated rind of a lemon and the yolks of five eggs; stir all the time until it thickens; do not let it boil; spread it out on a dish, and when quite cold form into small balls or squares; dip them into beaten egg and then into bread crumbs twice; lay them one by one into a wire basket, which put in a pan of boiling lard; let fry a light brown; drain well and sift powdered sugar over them.

WHITE GINGERBREAD.—Rub half a pound of butter into one pound of flour; add half a pound of loaf sugar, which should be finely powdered and sifted, and the rind of one lemon very finely minced, one ounce of ground ginger, and a nutmeg grated. Mix these well together; make one gill of milk just warm, stir in half a teaspoonful of carbonate of soda, and work the whole into a nice smooth paste, roll it out into cakes, and bake in a moderate oven from fifteen to twenty minutes.

CELEBY LEAVES.—Most housekeepers throw away the leaves and green tops of celery. There is a better way than this. Dry them thoroughly in the oven, then pulverise to a fine powder, and they make a very delicious seasoning for soup, the aroma and strength of the celery being remarkably preserved. After being pulverised, the powder should be kept in a jar or closed bottle to preserve the strength.

MISCELLANEOUS.

The Registrar in Bankruptcy lately refused costs applied for by counsel for her Majesty as Duchess of Lancaster, the counsel who opposed remarking that it was an ungracious act to apply for them on behalf of so exalted a personage.

An odd mania has broken out in St. Louis among the young ladies. They request their gentleman friends to give them silver dimes with one side ground smooth and the giver's initials in monogram etched on the smooth face. Each young lady is ambitious to show the longest string of monogram dimes.

The Post-office is about to adopt a system whereby persons desirous of having a certificate of the posting of a letter, newspaper, or book-packet without registering it, or obtaining for it any special security, may obtain such a certificate on payment of one halfpenny for each letter, newspaper, or book-packet. Forms of certificate will be sold at all post-offices, on which the address of the letter or packet must be written by the sender, and after examining it, the clerk at the counter will retain the letter, &c., and give the certificate back to the sender, impressed with the dated stamp of the office, as evidence of a letter having been posted.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

GLORIA B.—Grease spots may be removed from marble with a paste of fuller's earth and hot water applied and allowed to dry on, then scoured off after twenty-four hours with soft or yellow soap.

C. T.—It seems not only arbitrary but illegal that an apprentice should be made to pay for time lost during his master's "pleasure," but as we do not know the terms of the indenture we cannot advise in the matter. Consult a respectable solicitor, whose opinion would be worth its trivial cost.

D. H. W.—Occasional recreation is required by an article pupil as much as any other human being, and a master is presumably not justified in withholding it, nor has he necessarily the right of opening his pupil's letters, but you give us no information respecting circumstances which govern your case.

J. H. M.—You were very unfortunate in not receiving a better education, still, as "it is never too late to learn," you can now by perseverance become sufficiently well educated for the position you desire to obtain.

I. J.—The expression "Font est perdu, fors l'honneur"—"all is lost, save honour," originated with Francois I. of France, who wrote them to his mother after the siege of Pavia.

MARY.—The best cure you can find for the blues, which you say prove the bane of your life, is to have some study which will take up your time, and keep you from dwelling on your miseries. Try and be as cheerful as possible, if not for your own sake, at least for your friends' happiness, for where one in a family is invariably blue the other members of the house can never enjoy themselves thoroughly.

PHIL.—We fear that you are decidedly of a sceptical nature. You should not judge all women by one, nor think them always faithless. We trust that before long the love of some good woman will prove to you the fallacy of your present belief.

G. L.—No, we do not approve of long engagements, as we have often said, but still, in your case, we see no other alternative, that is, if the lady is willing to wait till you return from your three years' voyage. To leave her without offering any explanation for the exclusive attentions you have paid her would be decidedly unmanly.

S. B.—The first coins, called francs, were made of gold as early as 1390. The first silver franc was struck by order of Henry III., in 1575. The franc became the monetary unit on the establishment of the decimal system, and is equal in value to about 19.15 cents.

C. E.—We think, under the circumstances, you are fully justified in demanding an explanation of the gentleman's conduct. Should he refuse to grant your request, you should give him to understand that you wish his calls at your house discontinued.

JANE.—1. Your teachers may be strict in some of their rules, but you had better submit to them quietly. 2. No, we don't think it proper for a schoolgirl to correspond with half-a-dozen young men. 3. We think your parents more competent to answer this last question than anyone else, so decline to give our opinion on the subject.

JIMMY.—Your parents doubtless think they are advising you for your own good when they so persistently urge you to marry your distant cousin who will bring so much wealth into the family, but take our advice, and never disgrace your manhood by marrying a woman for whom you have not the least regard for the sake of living a life of ease.

HELEN.—Your lover does, indeed, seem to be of a very jealous disposition, and as to curing him of his jealousy, we must confess that we are at fault as to suggesting anything that might cure him of his falling. Probably, though, as he finds his suspicions are entirely groundless, he will begin to be less jealously inclined.

TED.—After you have been engaged to a lady five years we certainly think that you ought to marry her, even if you find that your love has decreased with time, especially when you know, as you say, that she cares for you as much as ever. You should reflect that her engagement to you has probably prevented her from marrying otherwise. Of course, if the young lady knew your feelings, she would release you from your promise, but if you think by marrying her you can make her happy it is your duty to do so, and such a marriage may, in spite of all your fears, prove a happy one for you.

ALF.—Patience is the first requisite, perseverance the second. These important questions require great consideration on both sides. A suitor who is hasty puts himself in a disadvantageous position.

JOHN and WALTER would like to correspond with two young ladies. John is nineteen, tall, brown hair, hazel eyes, good-looking, fond of home and children. Walter is eighteen, medium height, brown hair and eyes, and fond of music.

EMMA and EMILY would like to correspond with two gentlemen about thirty, good-looking, of loving dispositions, fond of home. Emma is twenty-five, brown hair, hazel eyes, handsome. Emily is twenty-six, good-looking, tall.

E. J. J., twenty-five, medium height, fair, and of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady. Must be about twenty, brown hair and eyes, fair, good-looking.

C. L. W., a seaman in the Royal Navy, medium height, dark, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady about seventeen, fond of home and children, medium height, good-looking, brown hair and eyes.

MARY, nineteen, medium height, fair, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a seaman in the Royal Navy. Respondent must be about twenty-one, good-looking, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

M. W. G., twenty-three, fond of home, brown hair, hazel eyes, medium height, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony. Must be twenty-two, medium height, dark hair and eyes, fond of home.

ALFRED and EDWARD, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Alfred is tall, fair. Edward is dark.

JAKE G. and CHARLEY L. S., two friends, wish to correspond with two young ladies. Jake G. is twenty-five, brown hair, blue eyes. Charley L. S. is nineteen, dark, blue eyes.

KATHLEEN and MARTHA, two friends, wish to correspond with two young gentlemen. Kathleen is eighteen, hazel eyes, tall, fair. Martha is tall, dark, fond of home and children.

VINCENT S., twenty-six, dark, medium height, fond of home and music, would like to correspond with a young lady between twenty and twenty-three, fond of home, fair.

A FAREWELL.

FAREWELL, farewell! 'Tis better we should part
While I can call you "friend."
You have your youth and I my well-loved art
Whereon each may depend.

'Tis yours, where Fame's proud temple gleams on high,
To struggle and obtain;
'Tis mine to stand and gaze unceasingly
On heights I cannot gain.

The world is wide, and every heart therein
Hath its peculiar cross;
So some may sorrow o'er the love they win,
As we do o'er our loss.

But, when your rest upon those heights, elate,
For which I strive in vain,
You may look back and smile upon the fate
That made our life-paths twain.

S. F.

M. G., twenty-one, curly hair, blue eyes, tall, would like to correspond with a young man with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be twenty-four, tall, dark, of a loving disposition.

A. G. and L. C., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. A. G. is twenty, tall, light brown hair and eyes, fair, fond of home. L. C. is twenty-two, medium height, dark brown hair and eyes, thoroughly domesticated.

F. W. and G. W., two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young women with a view to matrimony. F. W. is twenty-four, brown hair, blue eyes, good-looking. G. W. is twenty-one, auburn hair, hazel eyes, good-looking, of a loving disposition. Respondents must be about the same age, tall, dark, good-tempered.

E. T. and C. F., two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. E. T. is nineteen, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes. C. F. is twenty, tall, brown hair, dark. Both are domesticated.

HENRY C., a sailor in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony. He is twenty-four, dark, fond of home and children. Must be about twenty-one, fond of home and music, thoroughly domesticated.

JANIE M. and JESSIE G., two friends, would like to exchange carte-de-visite with two young gentlemen. Janie M. is a widow, twenty-eight, dark, good-looking. Jessie G. is twenty, tall, fair, blue eyes, good-looking, domesticated.

EMILY and SELINA would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Emily is dark, of a loving disposition. Selina is fair, and fond of home.

S. E. and L. N., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. S. E. is nineteen, tall, light hair, blue eyes. L. N. is twenty, tall, dark hair, good-looking, fond of home.

HELEN and LENA would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Helen is nineteen, tall, auburn hair, hazel eyes. Lena is seventeen, tall, dark, brown hair, grey eyes. Respondents must be about nineteen.

ELISA and NELLIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Eliza is twenty-two, medium height, light brown hair, blue eyes. Nellie is twenty, tall, light brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and music.

ALICE and GRACE, two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen. Alice is eighteen, fair, of a loving disposition. Grace is seventeen, light hair, considered good-looking.

HARRY P., twenty-three, dark, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty with a view to matrimony.

JEREMIAH, a seaman in the Royal Navy, twenty-six, good-looking, dark hair, blue eyes, tall, would like to correspond with a young lady about seventeen, fair, tall, good-looking.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

LOHNEY ANNIE is responded to by—Richard, eighteen, blue eyes.

FRANK by—K. N., twenty-four, brown hair and eyes, loving.

EMILY by—Henry, twenty-three, light hair, brown eyes, tall.

E. W. by—J. E.

HARRY by—C. W., twenty, tall, fair, dark hair and eyes.

BOSS F. by—S. F., eighteen, dark hair, blue eyes, and loving.

H. L. H. by—C. M., twenty-one, tall, dark, good-looking, blue eyes.

JANIE by—E. F.

POLLY L. T. by—Timothy C., good-looking, and fond of music and dancing.

GEORGE by—Mary, nineteen, fond of home, medium height.

EMMA by—Thomas R., nineteen, dark hair, blue eyes, fond of home.

T. S. by—Anna L., twenty, tall, dark, brown eyes, and fond of music.

G. T. by—L. W.

S. M. by—O. E., twenty, dark hair, hazel eyes, and domesticated.

TIM by—L. C., seventeen, dark hair and eyes, good looking.

C. G. by—Lottie, twenty-two, fond of music and dancing.

JOSEPH by—Florrie, twenty-three, medium height, and loving.

W. C. W. by—Sarah H., good-looking, auburn hair, and fond of home.

OCEAN WAVE by—Marion H., twenty-five, dark brown hair and eyes, medium height.

MIRIAM by—Jack, nineteen, fond of music, thoroughly domesticated.

ETHEL B. by—P. W.

LOTTIE by—Johnny, nineteen, dark, and of medium height.

KATE S. by—Henri, eighteen, fair, medium height, and good-looking.

BERT by—Ada, fair, fond of home, thoroughly domesticated.

DAISY by—Long Harry, tall, dark, black eyes, fond of home.

F. M. A. by—Laura, fair, medium height, considered good-looking.

TOM by—Jessie, twenty-one, dark, golden hair, and blue eyes.

TED by—F. M. L., fair, medium height, of a loving disposition.

L. L. by—Roy, eighteen.

T. W. by—E. C., twenty.

JACK by—Liz, twenty-two, of a loving disposition, and domesticated.

WILLIE by—Clara.

M. W. W. by—Emily.

G. DE V. by—E. W., twenty-one, medium height, dark hair, hazel eyes, good-tempered, and of a loving disposition.

E. W. by—Dora S., seventeen, brown hair, hazel eyes, medium height.

L. J. S. by—Bessie, twenty-one, medium height, dark hair.

BRITTA by—Robert, good-tempered, and of a loving disposition.

EDGAR H. by—Agnes.

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